スレイヤーズ
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デモン・スレイヤーズ!
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SLAYERS:

DEMON SLAYERS!

ONE: They're back?! The Dragon-Elf Comedy Duo!

It began as a scene from an average, ordinary night.

"Firebal !"

BOOM!

My spell surrounded five or six men and blasted them away!

"Wh-What the hell?!

"A raid?!"

"Morons! You think an official would suddenly use a spell like that?! That probably came from some kind

of grotesque life-form of unparalleled ferocity–"

"Mega Brand!"

KABOOOOM!

My second wave of anger interrupted the bandit in the middle of his bullshit. Seriously! Referring to the

lovely and beautiful warrior genius sorceress, Lina Inverse, as some unidentified life-form? I can't forgive

that! Then again, after being hit by two or three spel s…

Behind me and off to the side, a lust for blood appeared! Immediately, I dove forward, and right at that

moment– Boom! In the background there was the flash of an explosion. An attack spell! Some distance

from the thicket I jumped into, the leaves rustled and a sorcerer dressed all in black was standing in front

of me. In the dry, scorched air, we confronted each other.

Hmmm….

“By any chance, are you some kind of bodyguard for that bandit gang?” If a sorcerer is worried about

paying for his meals, he could fal into some pretty shady business. It’s a fairly common situation.

“And what about you? Are you a dog for the officials? It doesn’t seem like you are…” I couldn’t see his

face at al , but from his voice he wasn’t young. When he asked, I puffed out my chest.

“Hmph. You can tel by looking. I was in a bad mood and I had some free time, so I came to knock out

some bandits to distract myself!”

“How would you be able to tel that just by looking?!” After his comeback, the edges of the sorcerer’s

mouth formed into an unfitting smile. “Hmm… Wel , that’s fine… At any rate, I’m the one who should be

assisting these men. Since you appeared before me, you should pray that you avoid any misfortune!” He

said as he raised both of his hands, etching a symbol in the air and reciting a spell. A blue light appeared,

running across the ground, and a giant magic circle was drawn, spinning in reverse.

“N-No Way!” When I cried out in terror, a grin formed on the sorcerer’s face.

“Come forth! My loyal friend, the lesser demon, Jardoong!”

The intensity of the magic square’s light increased, and at the very center, from the abyss where the light

couldn’t reach, a grotesque shadow burst out! Twisted limbs, dark wings– There, was a lesser demon.

“You’re… joking…” I whispered in a hoarse voice.

The lowest ranking Mazoku. I can’t say that they’re abundantly intelligent, but their magical and defensive

abilities would definitely be a threat to a line of sorcerers and warriors. But…

“…you used that grandiose magic circle and that over-the-top spel … and you only called forth *one* lesser

demon…? P… Pfffffthahahaha!” I lost my self control and burst into laughter.

“What did you say?!” The sorcerer was enraged when he heard me.

“B-But… because of al that exaggerated… I thought you would…!”

“Don’t try to talk while you’re bent over clutching your stomach!

Fine! If you don’t know the terror of a

lesser demon, you should set aside your stupidity and pray for death!”

“GROOOOAAR!” As if agreeing with the angered sorcerer, the lesser demon howled at the moon.

Yeah… Okay, okay. I recited a spel in my mouth.

Just then.

Suddenly.

The world. Trembled.

It gave me a feeling I couldn’t describe.

Wha…?

“What the–?! What was that?!” It appeared I wasn’t the only one that felt it. The sorcerer in front of me

seemed disturbed as well. The temperature of the wind, the smell of the air. Going by appearance, it was

as if the area hadn’t changed at al . But, there was an intense uncomfortable feeling. The sorcerer and I

said nothing. And during that brief period–

“Raaaargh!” Stomping through that odd silence was the howl of the lesser demon. Its body was

convulsing al over, just as if it were twitching with death. And then its back… split apart! No, something

suddenly appeared. There were now four black wings waving in the breeze. I real y don't know what just

happened. I don't know, but… A sinister feeling ran down my back. Reacting to my premonition, I

released a spell at the lesser demon.

"Elmekia Lance!" The lance of light flew at the demon at ful speed!

With a sound that resembled squeaking metal, a light appeared in midair, right in front of the lesser

demon's chest. It took the form of a magic circle with a reversed star, and prevented a direct hit from my

spell. With a shrill sound, the spell was extinguished, and of course, the lesser demon was unscathed.

"Wha…?!" That was a spel that inflicts damage from the Astral Plane. Until now I had used that spel on

countless lesser demons, or even the higher level brass demons, to consign them to oblivion. But this

lesser demon had formed a barrier which defended against my spel . That was the first time I'd seen

something like that. Then again, lesser demons usually do have the magical ability to do something like

that, they just shouldn't be smart enough to.

"What the hel was that?!"

"I-I don't know!" I wasn't asking anyone specifically, but the

sorcerer who had called forth the demon

answered. “This has never… A-Anyway! It doesn’t matter! Lesser demon!” Responding to the sorcerer’s

call, the lesser demon looked toward him. The sorcerer pointed in my direction.

“Destroy that girl!”

Grrrrr…. It leaked out a beastly growl, and in front of the lesser demon, several flare– no, spears of light

appeared! Traces of white were etched into the darkness, and a lance of light pierced the sorcerer from

behind. I couldn’t comprehend what had happened. Leaving behind only a scream of agony, the sorcerer

collapsed. The lesser demon then turned and stared right in my direction. I hurriedly cast a spell, but

before it was perfected, another wave of light spears appeared in front of the growling lesser demon. They

were released instantaneously. But not at me. A little bit to the side, the cluster of lights rained down. Just

as they pierced the blackness, a new silver afterimage was drawn in the dark and the spears of light were

cut down.

Just like I said, the lesser demon’s attack was cut down by a sword. Whoever had done it hadn’t said

anything until now. I hadn't been able to see who had caused the streak of light, but the only swordsman I

knew who was capable of it, wasn't like that.

My traveling companion– a blond, beautiful, super-warrior, whose brain was always in its rainy season.

His name was Gourry Gabriev.

"Wooaaah!" he knocked through the light lances, raised his voice, and confronted the lesser demon al in

one go. The demon flapped his four wings as if he was going to take off into the sky, but before he could,

Gourry jumped into its chest. Quick as ever! The silver blade flashed and the tattered black wings fell like

dead leaves. A moment later, the lesser demon's body col apsed as if it were a giant tree.

"Look, Lina…" Returning his sword to its scabbard, Gourry cal ed to me, half sighing. "Sneaking out in the

middle of the night to do something like this again–"

"You can preach later." I interrupted Gourry, wearing a serious expression. I looked around the area.

When that lesser demon went mad and killed the sorcerer, the bandits must have gotten nervous and

scattered. Now that the lesser demon had been defeated, all the hostile presences had already vanished

from the area, which is why Gourry put his sword away.

“This lesser demon, he suddenly transformed and kil ed the sorcerer that summoned him. And not even

from the front. There’s a chance that the sorcerer didn’t have very good control over him, but… There’s a

chance that something else has happened. Stay on your guard.”

“R-Real y?” He anxiously looked around the area. But of course, there weren’t any enemies around.

One-Hit K.O.! That put an end to his nagging! That doesn’t usual y work against careless opponents.

However. This time there was something I didn’t realize. Real y, something else had happened there.

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A dark sky. A frozen city. In the span of one breath I had gone numb, the clear air encroaching on my

lungs. Dozens and dozens of black shadows with wings took to the air.

The season was too early for snow, but all of the sound had been absorbed, wrapped in silence and

nothingness. Like a black and white painting, or a nightmare left behind by a demented prophet. But it

wasn’t a painting. It wasn’t a nightmare. What was in front of my eyes was real.

“What… is this…?” as I spoke my voice quivered, either from the cold, or for some other reason.

“It’s not… winter yet…” Gourry was standing beside me, dumbfounded.

The night I defeated those bandits, we left our inn heading for a large city via a mountain pass. There, a

small town stood before us. Overrun with demons, it was a town frozen in death. As we were walking

down the main road, the area quickly became colder. I thought it was strange but, as we crossed over a

slight hill, we witnessed this scene.

“Let’s go Gourry!” I said as I took off running, Gourry only half a step behind me.

“Go? But…!”

“There are stil demons hanging around! That means there might stil be some people left alive!”

“Got it!” Gourry answered with a nod and I started casting a spell. We were stil a good distance from the

town. If we continued sprinting we wouldn’t have any energy left to fight when we arrived, and there was

no reason for that. I took Gourry’s hand, and using Boost I put a high-speed flight spell into operation.

“Ray Wing!” wrapped in a wind barrier, we took off at ful speed.

The town steadily became larger in my

field of vision but I couldn’t see any people moving around. They could be hiding in their homes or… I

shook off my bad feeling and soon after, we arrived there.

It was definitely a town of death. From a distance I couldn’t tel , but al through the streets lay the bodies of

people murdered by demons. They had lost all of their body heat and were lying in the snow. That’s why

these once living things blended in to the white scenery. It seemed like many people had tried hiding in

their homes because practically all of the houses had their doors and windows open. The only things

moving was the falling snow and the shadows of the demons. A number of those shadows noticed Gourry

and I.

And began to rush toward us! Just like he one we saw last night, their silhouettes had four crooked wings.

“Let’s go, Gourry!”

“Right!”

Gourry drew his sword and I chanted a spell in my mouth. Right now there were five or six of them coming

toward us, though I didn’t know how many there were total. If we hadn’t been in a town I could blast them

al away with a Dragon Slave…

With a noise like a hateful groan, they produced multiple arrows of light, which turned the falling snow into

vapor as they rushed toward us. Their aim was dead ahead. But that meant it would be easy to avoid!

With a dash, Gourry and I dove into a side alley.

The arrows of light fell to the ground fruitlessly with a magnificent sound, causing steam to rise up. In

order to follow after us, some of them alighted on the ground, flapping their wings and peering into the

entrance of the alleyway.

“Blam Blazer!” I shot a blue light attack that took out several of the demons that had landed on the ground.

There was a chance that these demons could use a defensive barrier like the one from last night, but I

had no choice but to hit them with that surprise attack. The demons in the sky cast their gaze down on us.

“Ooooooohh!” By alternately kicking off the left and right al ey wal s, Gourry had already reached the top.

Letting loose his war cry, he sprung up at the demons in the air! He had jumped high enough to split one

of their heads, then change his trajectory so that he could cut off the wings of another one, and then

assault one more when he hit the ground. Being cautious of the remaining demons, Gourry moved away

from me. During that period I jumped out of the alley while casting a spell. The demon who fell when his

wings were slashed and another who foolishly came too close were easily cut down by Gourry. The last

one that was left either realized he was no match for us or decided he would challenge us from the sky.

With a great flap of his wings he took off into the air, where he was out of sword reach. But by that time I

had already completed my spell!

“Zelas Brid!” The ribbon of light I set loose continued after the demon. Just like last night, with a growl, the

demon produced a defensive barrier of light in front of itself. But this spel can’t be avoided so easily! The

band of light broke away the defensive barrier, and just like that, it smashed into the demons body. The

demon, losing its power, fell to the ground, kicking up the snow around it. For now we had defeated all of

the demons that came after us. The problem was, how many other demons were lurking elsewhere?

“It doesn’t seem like we’ve defeated every last one of them. Let’s move on!”

“Wait!”

My feet were filled with energy and ready to run, but Gourry stopped me. I felt it. There was some kind of

presence. I looked all around, searching for live presences in the area. A plane of snow. Scattered

corpses. The only thing moving was still just the falling snow. For a time, there was only snow and silence.

“How about you come out? Slowly, now.” Surveying the area, Gourry suddenly cal ed out. I looked in his

direction, and then a little farther at the roof of a house. “You real y just want to peak at us from up there?

If you want to settle this, we should do it quickly.”

Answering Gourry’s call, a red shadow rose up from on top of he roof. Landing down on the ground, it

walked toward us with a slow gait.

Ughehehe! As it approached I could see *it* more clearly and I automatically recoiled back a step. A long

time ago, in some Sorcerer’s Guild library, I had seen it, a diagram of the human muscular system. The

opponent before me was the spitting image of that diagram. It had the form of a human with it’s skin

peeled off, but in place of its eyes, it had two blood-colored fleshy knobs, stretching and wobbling around.

Yep. It’s eyes were just like a snail or a slug. Of course, with these kinds of looks it wasn’t exactly a

human and it wasn’t exactly a monster.

Mazoku.

But for the average Mazoku… this one had real y bad taste in looks.

“You’re no ordinary man… You sensed my presence.” It stopped a short distance away from us. It didn’t

have any lips, so it looked toward Gourry and spoke with its gums bared.

“We aren’t connected with anyone. You attacked this town to feed on the peoples’ terror, didn’t you? I

know you al were just having a little lunch but… would it trouble you to stop?”

“Ohh?” I butted in and the now interested Mazoku looked– well, his feeler-things were pointing toward me.

“You seem to know a bit about us. Then there’s no reason you wouldn’t know the terror of the Mazoku.

You seem skil ed but… would you mind if I tested you?”

“Were you expecting me to refuse?”

The muscles at the edges of his mouth warped, forming a smile. “If you understand then let’s cut this

short, and… Let’s go!” At his announcement, the Mazoku planted both feet firmly on the ground and both

fists on his waist. There was a sound like the buzzing of insects, and the snow surrounding the Mazoku

was blasted away. The vibrating wave drove away the snow and headed toward Gourry! Without trying to

avoid it, Gourry charged straight ahead.

“Fool!” the Mazoku sneered.

“Hah!” Gourry’s sword flashed and the sound split apart. There’s no way he could have been able to see

the power through the falling snow, but with his sword he somehow severed through the wave.

“Wha–?!” The Mazoku leaked out a gasp.

But Gourry must not have been able to perfectly counterbalance against the wave, and stopped in place.

That instant, there was a brief pause and I couldn’t let it go! I released the spel I had been casting.

“Dynast–!” Before I could let out the completed chaos words, the Mazoku created another vibrating wave,

scattering the piled up snow so that my field of vision was buried in white. Is he trying to blind me?!

Without letting it bother me, I guessed where to aim my spel . “–Brass!”

Magic Lightning gushed down at the spray of snow, and with a white-blue glow, instantly the snow

disappeared. But there was no reaction. I felt a bloodlust abruptly appear behind me.

“Lina!” Gourry rushed over to cover me, brandishing the sword in his hands. Once again, the sound of an

explosion rose up.

Moving behind me, the Mazoku had released an attack, and once again, Gourry had cut through it. But

the aftershock alone was like a paper balloon bursting next to my ear. In other words, it was incredibly

powerful. If that had hit me directly, I would have been incapacitated, or worse, my body probably

would’ve been blown away.

“Thanks, Gourry.” I said as I began casting a spel . Then, I noticed something unusual. It had

disappeared. The Mazoku had put away its sharp lust for blood. But that didn’t mean the Mazoku itself

was gone. Once the snow that had been blown up had settled again, I could see the Mazoku standing a

fair distance away from us. Except he no longer felt hostile nor had the urge to kill. Instead the Mazoku

emitted… confusion?

“Lina… Gourry…?” The Mazoku said as if he was somehow bothered.

“Oh, so you know our names?” I tried provoking him. Wel , until now Gourry and I have faced al kinds of

Mazoku, so there’s a chance he could have heard our names from them. Even so, the pure Mazoku in

front of us wasn't the kind of cute little guy to run away when he got a bit nervous.

"Lina… Inverse… Gourry… Gabriev…" I thought so. He does know our names.

"Do our names bother you?" As Gourry said it, the Mazoku jumped

–*backwards*.

"…Huh?" Not seeming to mind my look of confusion, the Mazoku headed back. From the ground to the

roof, then to the next roof, and the next, merging into the falling snow and disappearing. And readily

fol owing that, there was the sound of numerous wings flying away. They… retreated? Did the lower level

demons just follow him out of politeness?

"That's amazing, Lina…" After al of their presences had disappeared, Gourry put his sword away and

placed his hand on my head. "I thought it was just bandits… but looks like even Mazoku run away when

they hear your name."

"And why is thaaat?!" I released a critical uppercut and sent him scuttling across the snow.

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A strained atmosphere floated through the city. I noticed that there were soldiers, and that the people

coming and going had a tenseness coiled about them. Wel , that wasn't unreasonable. It had been about

ten days since the night when I watched a lesser demon transform into an even more grotesque figure.

Since then, every place that we had gone to had had abnormal weather patterns and had been frequently

attacked by demons.

"Hey Lina…" We were walking down the main street trying to decide on an inn to stay at for the night.

"The mood wasn't like this before, was it?"

"It was." I answered Gourry flatly. "A little while before the incident in Dils, the atmosphere around the

cities we went to was just like this, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, now that you mention it." He made a face like he understood and happily clapped his hands

together. Seriously, does this guy really understand…?

At the time, a high-ranking Mazoku, Dynast Grausherra had been acting secretly from behind the scenes.

Because of that, there had been outbreaks of low-ranking Mazoku, lesser and brass demons, who would

frequently attack towns and villages. The issue had been sorted out for now, but the fear and anxiety of

the time was still deeply rooted in the memories of the people. And

now that the same thing is happening

again, they are remembering it.

“…gh!” While thinking about this and that I focused on the scenery, and let out a little gasp. Just now, was

that–!? I started running without even thinking.

“Huh? Hey! Lina!?” Ignoring Gourry, I took off down the street and entered an al eyway. No one was there.

“What’s wrong? What was that al of a sudden?”

“Oh, it was nothing. I was just mistaken.” I gave an ambiguous answer to his question. “I saw a person

who looked like someone I knew from behind.”

“Hm.” Gourry gave a half-hearted sound of agreement to my vague explanation.

I decided that it had been a mistake. There are a lot of people who resemble other people, even more so

when it’s just a brief glance at their back.

“Wel , anyway. As for the inn–” I was interrupted by the sound of a distant scream from the city. Gourry

and I looked at each other without saying anything. Looking around the main street, the screaming and

the mayhem was all coming from one direction.

Mazoku! Mazoku are attacking!

You could hear a voice saying it through the screams. Gourry and I started running at the same time, in

the direction of where all the chaos was coming from. As we pushed our way through the crowds of

people trying to escape, the rush suddenly came to an end. It seemed we were arriving upon the scene of

the crime. Lying in the street only a little further ahead of us were the corpses of… demons?

The city guards probably defeated them. But in this area, there were no remains of guards to be found.

Lesser and brass demons are the lowest ranking of Mazoku, so for Gourry and I, they're just weaklings,

but for ordinary fighters and sorcerers, you could say they're a difficult opponent. That said, they aren't the

kind of opponent that normal city guards could defeat without a scratch. Which means the one who did

this…

"Lina! They're coming!" Gourry's voice cut through my thoughts. Fol owing his gaze, it seemed they had

discovered us. Four winged creatures came flying toward us. Gourry drew his sword and I cast a spell in

my mouth.

The demons howled and right in front of them appeared swaying

arrows of light. Just as they appeared,

several balls of light flew in from the side and collided with the demons in midair.

That attack–!

“It’s dangerous here.” The voice of the spel caster came from around a corner. Fol owing it appeared a

man. “Please evacuate to a safe . . . . . .” The man stopped in the mid sentence as he laid eyes on

Gourry and I. I thought so.

I knew his face, and he knew ours. He was a fairly attractive older man with blond hair, wearing leather

armor that resembled light mail over blue clothes. Of course, that wasn’t his true form. In the Kataart

Mountains, near where the Mazoku dwel , he governed the dragons that lived on Dragon’s Peak. He was

Mr. Milgazia, the elder of the Golden Dragons. That was his real form. Whenever he needed to take the

form of a human, he used transformative magic and appeared this way.

“You’re–”

“It’s Milgazia. *Milgazia.* Cal me by my name, human.”

“Oh. Right, Right.”

Interrupting Gourry as he opened his mouth, Mr. Milgazia spoke

forceful y. Hm… previously, though he

didn’t mean any il wil , Gourry had cal ed him a lizard. I guess that real y bothered him…

“It’s been a long time, humans. Wel , I guess it actual y hasn’t been. Wel , if it’s you two, I don’t think it’s

necessary to ask for help.”

“Mr. Milgazia! What are you doing in a– Wait! This isn’t the time for chit-chat! First we have to deal with

these demons!”

“There’s no need to be anxious. I’m not the only one who came here, so there should be no problems

dealing with low-level demons like those.”

…wait …does that mean…? Once I understood him, all of the blood rushed from my face.

“Is something wrong? The color of your face has changed.”

“Um… when you say you’re not the only one who came here… would that happen to mean that the one

who’s here with you…” Before I could finish what I was saying–

BOOOOM!

Some distance away, a white light smashed into several demons, as well as a number of surrounding

buildings.

“. . . . . .”

“. . . . . .”

“I thought there would be a problem…” Mr. Milgazia had no way of responding to Gourry. And so from the

sidelines, I watched the wild blast of white light. It exhausted me. Ahhhh, there she goes again, the stupid

Elf. My whole heart was grumbling to itself.

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Not much time had passed since we cleaned up the demons. But the damage to the city was immense.

The cause…? Don’t ask. Please.

“But why did we have to go to some other town? Weren’t we patrons of that city?!”

“How can you have any self-awareness and *say a line like that?!* ”

SMACK!

Without wavering, hesitating, or delay, I struck my opponent in the back of the head with a slipper. My

opponent: Blonde hair and beautiful looks, clad in white armor, a picky eater and unapologetically selfish.

A little while back, we met her while she was traveling with Mr. Milgazia. She was Memphis Linesword of

the Elves.

“You were the one bouncing al over the place going Pew! Pew! And shooting your laser breath

everywhere! When it comes to property damage, you’re guilty of much more than the demons! Now you’re

tel ing me you wanted to stay in that city?!”

After we defeated the demons, the four of us– Me, Gourry, Mr. Milgazia and then Memphis (Memphy),

dashed out of the town and continued down the road to a different city.

“I checked to make sure there weren’t any people around before I attacked!”

“Just because there weren’t doesn’t mean it’s okay to attack!” Wel . From time to time I have done things

like that. But that’s that and this is this. “They owe us some gratitude for repel ing the demons, but setting

that aside, there’s definitely going to be someone who expects to be compensated for having their

property wrecked! Or, did you want to stay there and take on a civil engineering job, hm, Memphy?”

“Uh… that’s…” when I asked her, she averted her eyes and stuttered. “A-Anyway, why are you keeping a

slipper in your breast pocket?! I don’t understand humans at al .”

“I keep al sorts of convenient things!” I gave such a vague answer

that she went stiff for a short while,

then clapping her hands together she turned to Mr. Milgazia. “Now I see. Certainly that does seem like

something useful. Right, Elder?”

“Yes. We’l have to try it some time.”

“Even humans have good ideas once in a while.”

Wait… they’re impressed by something like that without even real y understanding… I mean, I don’t even

know what I’m saying. Dragons and Elves shouldn’t understand at al . What kind of use could a Dragon or

an Elf have for a slipper stored away in their breast pocket? I’m only imagining real y unpleasant things…

“A-Anyway, moving on…” I pul ed myself together and posed a question to the two who were busy being

fascinated by things that not even a human would understand. “I see you two came down to another

human city. Is this stil about the demon outbreaks?”

“Yes.” Mr. Milgazia answered my question with a serious face. Wel , his face is always serious but…

Anyway, with a serious face, he nodded. “Previously it was a secret maneuver by Dynast Grausherra.

Grausherra himself said that the demon outbreaks were just so they could eat but I can’t believe

something like that.”

“So you’re saying…”

Mr. Milgazia nodded. “There’s a possibility that the Mazoku haven’t completely disappeared because

they’re planning a revival of the Kouma war. That’s what I was thinking. At any rate, though we Dragons

and Elves are not suffering directly from the sparks fal ing from these demon outbreaks, this isn’t

something we can just overlook.”

“I’m happy to hear you say that. But now, starting at almost the same time as the outbreaks, there’s been

strange weather everywhere. Are those incidents somehow related?”

“Honestly, I can’t say. But I didn’t think there were any Mazoku that could interfere with the weather.”

“So, it’s a not a power you’ve seen them use before?”

“No, they say when Flare Dragon Ceiphied fought with Ruby Eye Shabranigdu, half of the Sleeping

Dragon continent evaporated. Although that may only be a legend, if it were a high-ranking Mazoku, they

could have enough power to partially exert control over the weather. But of course that would require a

vast amount of power, and I can’t think of a reason where it would be worth expending that much power

just to control the weather."

"I see…"

"Now that you mention it, around two days ago we stopped by a city that was unusually hot, but no

demons ever appeared."

"Hot?"

Memphis jumped into the conversation. What she said made me furrow my brow.

"About ten days ago, Gourry and I went to a city that was real y cold."

"Oh? Wel , maybe you're just real y sensitive to the cold."

"Nooo! It was so cold that… Hm… I got it. It was about as frigid as sixty of Mr. Milgazia's jokes."

"Hold on human." Ignoring Mr. Milgazia's protest, I continued as I was.

"I give it a 2 out of 7 on the cold scale."

"That low?!"

"Wait! What is that supposed to mean, human?!"

"Oh, it doesn't mean anything… of course, that has meaning on its own…"

"What?!" Our Golden Dragon elder was deeply agitated. "Are you saying… my jokes are bad?"

“Wel , they aren’t quite at the level of bad… just at the level where they could be used as psychological

warfare. Oh, incidental y, a ’5′ would be around the level where it would be impossible to survive.”

“Impossible to survive?! Ugh…!” He clenched his fist. “There was a time where I was once cal ed Jol y Mr.

Mil. It seems my era is over…”

When did your era even start?

Memphy clung to the dejected Mr. Milgazia. “That’s not true, Elder! Your jokes have always been a big hit!

Surely having such short life spans, their human senses are just immature! Elder’s comedy is simply too

high-brow for them! See? My favorite act is the one where you were fencing off that vacant lot! When I

think about it… pfffthaha!”

It’s not her fault if she laughs when she thinks about it, but by only hearing that much… it sounds like a

real y boring story. Yeah, I real y don’t understand their humor…

“Th-That’s right! That was my joke!” Recovering, Mr. Milgazia pointed in my direction, “Listen good,

human! I’l tel you my most amusing joke!”

“W– Hold on, Mr. Milgazia! We’re getting real y off topic!” I quickly tried to think of a way to stal and avoid

his story. The day I hear the joke that is regarded as ‘the most amusing’ by a dragon and an elf that are

totally out of sync with human senses, is the day I have a mental breakdown. The one who changed the

subject to begin with was me, myself, but let’s not bring that up.

“We should be talking about the Mazoku’s objective! Like… if you have any clues, or where we should

head next. Do you know anything like that? If not, we won’t the best course of action.”

“Certainly, that would be a problem.” Mr. Milgazia took the bait. Yes! I avoided absolute crisis! “I have no

doubt of what’s happening. It could be that other high-ranking Mazoku were affected by the issue with

Dynast Grausherra, though I can’t ful y understand why the others would be hiding their presences at this

point. Actually, when Memphy and I descended down into the human towns again, I said it was because I

couldn’t overlook the situation, but at the same time our main goal was to gather clues to help our

investigation.”

“Hmm… Looking for clues… There’s no way we could ask the Mazoku directly. All we can really do is

wander around aimlessly.”

“Exactly. But without even a rough idea, this method is…”

“Then there’s only one course of action!”

“Oh? And what’s that?”

With a snap, I raised my index finger, “We forget about al of this and try to live happily.”

“What are you thinking?!”

“That doesn’t solve anything, human.”

Memphy and Mr. Milgazia shot down my wondrous proposal in unison.

“J-Just joking… But… the fact is, we real y can’t take action.”

“That’s for sure…”

“That is… true…”

“Whaaat? Then there’s no need to worry.” From one side of our distressed party, came a carefree voice

from the only one who hadn’t said anything, Gourry.

“What do you mean there’s no need to worry?”

“We just have to al be present and the problem will come to us. That’s how it always is.”

“Don’t say that’s how it always is! And don’t act so cheerful just because it’s true!” My scream echoed

from the bottom of my heart and all the way down the vacant road.

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It’s not something that I’m proud of, but I’ve grown accustomed to being attacked. My opponent: Mazoku.

For example, out on a vacant highway. I could sense hostility coming from within the underbrush, where

the enemy lied. Or in a room at an inn. A bad omen would awaken me and I could feel an enemy drawing

near my window. But of course, there were the kind of Mazoku that made a grand entrance at a crowded

restaurant in broad daylight. That was how this whole experience started. From the very beginning no one

paid it any mind. When a doorbell chimes, you naturally open the door. And just as naturally, *that* came

walking into the shop. Imagine a dead tree, but in the shape of a robust human. That’s what I’m talking

about. If it just had holes in the positions of where its eyes and mouth would be, that might be humorous

in itself, but it didn’t have a mouth, and it had big, weird, bloodshot eyebal s, and it was flailing around

without any sense of composure. It lumbered into the shop looking all around, as if it was trying to fins

someone it had arranged to meet with. At first, someone must have noticed it coming near. Because of its

unusual presentation, it caused silence to spread through the crowded restaurant. So upon its arrival,

everything was perfectly still.

We were having a meal at a table in the corner of the restaurant. For an instant we hadn't realized what

had happened and went stiff. Before we could come to our senses, it moved. With two arms, that didn't

look like dead trees, it tore through the air– and the nearby diners. They bent back, spurted blood, and

collapsed.

Screams. Instantly the place was filled with screams. Falling into a panic, the customers started running

haphazardly in all directions. Slipping through the crowd, Gourry pressed in on the Mazoku. With this

sloppy crowd of people it would be dangerous to use any projectile magic. In that case, I'l rely on my

sword! But before I could act, the Mazoku sensed Gourry coming toward it. Holding one hand out toward

Gourry, its fingers extended. But it wasn't using a linear attack. Gourry avoided its fingers then lopped

them off as he passed them. He continued to rush by and with a silver streak, the dead tree Mazoku was

very easily sliced on a diagonal.

"Careful, Gourry!" I cried, "That was too easy!"

"I know!" The moment Gourry answered. The fingers which had

been sliced off in the first attack, stuck

into a floorboard, swelled up, and instantly regained its dead tree form.

Hey! Is that supposed to be your real body?!

Gourry turned when he felt its presence. The dead tree Mazoku that had been cut down had regenerated

the same form from the roots up! Was this Mazoku a combined pair, like the Red and Gray Mazoku we

once fought?

With al the disorder caused by al of the people running around, Mr. Milgazia, Memphis, and I couldn’t

take up a defensive position. The twin Mazoku raised their fingers up and transformed them into arrows,

releasing them toward Gourry! Gourry prepared his sword. Before he could swing, there was a sound like

an explosion, and the arrows coming toward him dropped to the ground in vain.

“This is…“ One of the dead tree Mazoku spoke in a cheeky human voice and shot a glance back.

Ugheh?!

I looked in the same direction and instinctively recoiled. Standing right in the center of the crowd, was the

muscly slug-eyed Mazoku we encountered in the frozen city. *This guy?!* When did he show up?!

When he appeared, the other customers probably became even more riled up. But I didn’t feel his

presence when he arrived. I soon understood the reason for that. I hadn’t felt any hostility toward us at all.

No, in fact, from the dead tree Mazoku’s reaction, it felt like the ‘anatomical model Mazoku’ tried stopping

them with an attack. But why…? I can think about that later! Right now we have to defeat the enemies in

front of us! Which means al of the panicked people running around us……..

Smack. “Doh!”

Bam. “Hah?!”

Thump. “Gagh!”

“W-What are you doing, Human Girl?!”

“Attacking.” Mr. Milgazia asked as he headed through the crowd, and I answered him bluntly. “If al these

people aren’t gonna settle down, we’ll just have to get rough and make them settle down! If we don’t,

everyone here is doomed!”

“I guess that’s true.”

“You would agree, evil Elf!” I don’t know if she didn’t hear me, or if she was just ignoring me. The white

armor that was wrapped around Memphy burst open, transforming into wide, white wings.

“Gaaghwegh!” The people the wings knocked into were blown away and lost consciousness.

“What the hel are you doing?! Tactless Elf!”

“Am I not doing the same thing you just did?!”

“It was okay when I did it!”

“And why is that?! Anyway, it seems like there’s a bit less

movement!”

“That’s true!”

Through the great efforts of Memphy and I, there weren’t any people running around anymore. But

somehow I got the feeling that to the people huddling together in the corner of the restaurant, we probably

looked just as bad as the Mazoku… But it was their own damn fault! (clearly.)

Now that we final y had room to ensure the peoples’ protection, I began casting a spel . Before I could

complete it, the dead tree Mazoku at the back of the restaurant extended its fingers toward where Gourry

was– not, and instead reached for the ceiling.

Stabbing a ceiling board and using it as a fulcrum, it swung its body all the way around Gourry, and joined

with the other dead tree Mazoku. Hand in hand and feet aligned, there was a sound like creaking wood

and the two bodies fused together. The instant they were back in one body, without any hesitation, it

turned around, and dashed out of the shop. As soon as they were out of sight, the anatomical model

Mazoku disappeared, as if he had just sunken into the floor.

“Ch–!” Gourry went running after it and I fol owed. Of course, in

this situation, it was a bad idea to follow

them too far, but outside the restaurant was a street lined with stores, thus pedestrians. There was a

chance that maybe some spectators had gathered, and if Mazoku suddenly came dashing out, who

knows what kind of disasters there could be?

Opening the door– Wham!

“B–!” My face crashed straight into something. Directly outside of the door, Gourry was standing stil .

…and my face had run into the back of his breastplate. That real y hurt… But anyway. “Hey! Gourry! What

are–?!” I started to yel , but I couldn’t force anymore words out. It was just like my bad feeling. Noticing

that there was some kind of trouble happening inside the shop, a fairly large crowd had gathered. They

had formed a circle around the shop, and at the dead center, was Gourry and me. Their inquisitive stares

fel on me. Those stares wanted to know what exactly had happened inside. Basical y, they didn’t see it,

the Mazoku that just scurried out of the shop. If they had, it would have caused a big panic.

Come to think of it, it was actual y real y quiet… When the Mazoku entered the shop, there was no sign of

any fuss outside. If something that looked like that was just strolling down the street in the middle of the

afternoon, it should cause some form of unrest. That must mean this dead tree Mazoku appeared at the

shop's door and disappeared from the shop's door. Wel , real y that means it crossed space at that point

and disappeared off to somewhere else.

"Uhhhh…. um…." being real y not able to figure out what just happened, Gourry asked the crowd

awkwardly, "Er… Just now… did a guy that looked like a dead tree come out this door?"

...silence...

Gourry., if you say it like that, al the people who don't know anything about Mazoku are going to think

you're sick in the head. "Excuse me, but just now, did anyone see someone suspicious run out of here?" I

knew it was hopeless, but fol owing Gourry's line, I had to ask them.

"If you want suspicious, the guy next to you is the most suspicious." After that first comment, everyone

started talking on their own.

"Why do you have such a big sword drawn?"

"Something happen inside? Fight? Thieves?"

"You're the ones that started it, aren't you?"

“Everything’s already been settled!” I raised my voice, overpowering the crowd. Now that I had a chance

where all of them were quiet, I continued talking as I looked around. “Wel , even if we lowered our swords,

what we say wouldn’t matter because we’d still look questionable. But if you like, you can ask the other

people inside this restaurant for details later.” Whether they agreed or simply lost interest, the onlookers

dispersed.

Just outside the circle of the meandering crowd, chestnut colored hair softly swayed. For a moment she

stopped moving. Then her head turned and she looked at me over one of her shoulder guards. All I saw

was her profile, and it was only a brief occurrence. Her long hair shook again, and she disappeared into

the crowd.

Unconsciously, I cast a spel ,“Ray Wing!” Using Boost with a high-speed flight spell, I flew over the heads of the crowd all at once. I searched the area in frustration. I could see her a good distance away, running

and weaving her way through the crowd. She turned a corner and disappeared into an alleyway. I arrived

one breath behind her, and looking over the alley, of all the people

that were there, the one I was looking

for was not.

“Hey. Lina.” Gourry put a hand on my shoulder once he caught up with me. “What’s wrong? What was

that al of a sudden?”

“I saw it. A face I knew.”

“Hmmm… Real y? Because I feel like this same thing just happened just a little while ago…”

“It was her.” There was no doubt in my voice.

“Wouldn’t she stil be around here, then? She’s an acquaintance, right? If you want, we can look for her

together. What does she look like?”

“Beautiful, around 17 or 18 in age with kind of a smal build and long chestnut-colored hair. She wore a

black bandana, shoulder guards, and a cape like a sorceress.”

“So you’re saying she resembles you, except for the ‘beautiful’ and ‘kind of’ a smal build parts.”

“You’re wrong.” Of course I said this while kicking him. “She didn’t *resemble* me. She was *exactly the same as me*.”

スレイヤーズ15
デモン・スレイヤーズ!

TWO: Going on Our Journey, We Meet Halfway, Face to Face.

“So it was a doppelganger.” After listening to my story, Mr. Milgazia commented as expressionless as

ever.

Doppelganger: A second living creature exactly the same as the original. Either this was the kind of

phenomenon where you get a fleeting glance of one then it vanishes, or this was our enemy’s doing. Then

again, it could just be a long lost twin, without the heartwarming story that usually comes with it. The girl I

saw could have died before she got too far from us, or it was an evil spirit taking the form of a

doppelganger, or it could all simply be part of my imagination. You could say all sorts of things but her

identity was still unknown. Talking about all of this, the four of us had left the restaurant and were

wandering down the main street.

Eventually the city guards had come running into the shop, but what had happened was plain and clear:

the Mazoku that had attacked the restaurant had been driven away by Gourry. Of course the officials

never suspected we were related to the attack. Fortunately there weren’t any deaths, but the culprit got

away and the restaurant was a mess. This wasn't a situation where we could just tel everyone to calm

down and keep eating, so we left.

"Now that you mention it, are there stories of doppelgangers among Dragons and Elves?"

"Only misinformation and mistakes." Mr. Milgazia said flatly. "At least, I haven't heard of any stories where

doppelganger phenomena has been observed by us Dragons and Elves. But I knew there were such

rumors in human society. Though the cultural soil is different, but if it's born simply of rumors, that makes

it misinformation. And if one simply catches sight of someone who looks like someone else, then it's a

mistake."

"So you're saying… they don't real y exist."

"And you're sure you weren't mistaken? It wasn't just a stranger that real y closely resembled you?"

"That's not how it is." I shook my head side to side at Memphy's question. "It's true that there are enough

people in the world that it wouldn't be strange if there were one or two that looked like me. But there's no

way the bandana and the shoulder guards would also be exactly the same, right?"

“Wel …” Memphy shifted her gaze to Gourry. “ You saw it too? Her double?”

“No, I didn’t see it.”

“Seeeeeeee?” Memphy triumphantly puffed out her chest and looked back at me. “Does that not mean

you were just imagining it?”

Ugh. The way she says that makes me so mad.

“No, not necessarily.” he came to my aid unexpectedly.

“What does that mean, Elder Mr. Milgazia?”

“You probably remember what happened in Dils. At the time, Dynast took the form of the king and not

even his closest servants realized it.”

“So then, that other me is also…”

“Maybe. It could be as Memphy says and it’s just a mistake. But then if it was a Mazoku taking that form,

we don’t know their objective.”

“That’s for sure…”

“Hey… It’s not a big deal but, we should go somewhere to eat. We don’t need to be walking around, do

we?”

“Wel , that’s true.” I nodded in agreement at Gourry. Now that I think about it, our lunch was interrupted by

that Mazoku. I looked around and laid eyes on a nearby restaurant. “Is everyone okay with that–”

“Elder and I don’t particularly care–”

“Wel , that goes without saying. This is for socializing! Fel owship! We’re just standing around here talking

anyway, aren’t we?” I warded off Memphy’s complaint and half-forced them into the restaurant, picking out

a suitable table.

“You said we were just standing around talking but… If we continue discussing the issue, at this point can

we real y come to a distinct conclusion?”

“…gh!” I flinched at Mr. Milgazia’s question.

“That’s true. I’m not going to ask if you only came in here because you wanted keep eating… but at the

same time, humans–”

“Y-You’re making too big of a deal out of it! I can’t help it! When I’m hungry, I’m hungry!” As I was trying to

defend myself, a waitress came over.

“Oh? Didn’t you already leave, Miss?”

. . . . . .

“Miss?”

“…. *Huh?* ” I blurted out like an idiot. The waitress was talking to

none other than me but… this was the first time I'd been in this restaurant. " . . . . . me?" I asked as I pointed to myself and she nodded up and

down.

"Yes, you. …Oh, I understand. Did you happen to forget the route? I can explain it to you again. Okay? If

you leave this city from the north and follow the main road for a little while, you'l come to a junction where

it meets another main road. Head west from there– that would be on the left hand side, and you'l arrive in

Atlas City. Heading Northwest from there–"

"H-Hold– Wait just a second!" I fiercely stopped her. I had no idea what she was trying to explain.

"Oh, I get it. Of course if I say it al at once, you'll get confused again. Okay then, remember this: head

north. Where the main roads merge, go left. Straight ahead will be Atlas City. Once you get there ask

someone for the rest of–"

"I said wait! What the hel are you talking about?!"

"What am I…? The way to Sairaag. When you were here before, you asked me that, didn't you?"

"Huh?" Once again, I blurted out like an idiot. Before? The way to Sairaag? I know I hadn't asked the

waitress for directions, but coming here… It can’t be! “Listen!” I jumped up from my chair and grabbed the

waitress’ hand. “That was probably my long lost twin sister!”

“Huuuuhhhh?!” At that, the waitress, Gourry, and Memphis cried out in shock.

“I’ve been searching for her for years! Are you tel ing me she just happened to be in a place like this?! She

should have looked just like me!”

“Uhhhh…. Are you real y… two different people? Your clothes were exactly the same too…”

“How long ago? What was she like? You said she asked the way to Sairaag?!”

“I wouldn’t say you just missed each other… since it was only a little while ago. She was just here around

midday. What she was like..? She calmly ate a light meal, then asked ‘can you tel me how to get to

Sairaag?’ As soon as the directions left my mouth, she made her way out.”

“I see…” I gave a smal nod and sat back down again. “Now, could you please take our orders?”

“Ehh?! Shouldn’t you be fol owing your sister?! She could stil be in the city!”

“It’l be fine. If not, now that I know where she’s going, things should turn out okay. And if we hurry we

might get ahead of her and there’d be no sense in that. It’s fine. Orders.”

“O-Okay…” The waitress made a face almost as if she didn’t understand. She took our orders and drew

back into the restaurant. As we waited…

“L-Lina… you had a long lost sister?!”

“Honestly, how could you believe a story like that, Gourry?”

“That was a lie?!” So you believed that too, Mr. Milgazia? From his expressionless face, I just figured he

knew what I was doing…

“If I hadn’t said something like that we wouldn’t be able to move forward, right? Anyway, is everything

clear now? I knew there was someone who looked like me here.”

“Impossible… You aren’t just making fun of us and this is all some elaborate prank, right? Because if you

think about it like that, you are the one who chose this restaurant.”

The one who responded to the persistently suspicious Memphy wasn’t me, but Gourry.“That’s not it. That

girl just now said she was calm and she ate a *light* meal. Does that sound like Lina?”

“Certainly, now that you mention it…”

“I felt the same.”

“Wait, you guys… What’s that supposed to mean…? Actual y, I’m not going to ask that because if I do

you'l al immediately respond with 'it's just like we said.' Anyway! My double was here which means you

have to believe me!"

"But… we just happened to come to this restaurant by chance…"

"It wasn't by chance. Probably. I'l have to check up on this later, but it seems my imposter went around to

al the shops asking directions to Sairaag. If that's true, then there would be a good chance that it would

eventually reach my ears. I think she may have tried the same trick in the town where we met up with you

two but… At the time, we weren't able to speak to anyone, but because of the indiscriminately destructive

Elf, Memphy, we had to quickly get out of town."

"Just one minute! The way you say that–!"

"Anyway, the problem is, someone is doing this for a reason."

"Don't just ignore me!"

"The answer is simple. It's an invitation. The Mazoku are inviting us to Sairaag City." This time Memphy

didn't interrupt.

"If that's what you think, it's the most appropriate theory…" Mr. Milgazia waited a while for the waitress to

bring a mixed salad to the table then leave before he gave a nod of agreement. "But then, what on earth is

going on in Sairaag?”

Sairaag City. In a contest of cities that caused nation-wide misfortune, it competed shoulder to shoulder

with Gyria City with its issues with Dynast. Frankly, that’s the kind of city it is. Around one hundred years

ago, the magical beast Zanaffar, an armored, imperfect magical being made by humans, went on a

rampage and destroyed it. It was somehow reconstructed, but then around two years ago it was

destroyed again by a great sage’s imposter. And then after that, Hel master made it into his den where he

would welcome the Lord of Nightmares.

…Correction. It beats Gyria City by a landslide as the world’s most unfortunate city. If you think about it,

setting aside the problems inside the palace, the city being turned into a sea of fire was really the only big

problem. To that extent, it’s ridiculous to compare Gyria to Sairaag. Wel , that might not be how it is for

everyone…

And so it appears that this time, the Mazoku are planning something in Sairaag again. It’s not

exaggerating to say that this might also turn into a misery fair. The city’s been fil ed. It lives.

“It’s a city where lots of things have happened but with all the negative emotions wafting around there, it

would be easy for the Mazoku to use, wouldn’t it?” I said while reaching for some vegetables.

“That may be so.” Mr. Milgazia said with a grave expression. “I understand that over many years, there

have continued to be serious problems occurring there, but what on earth could be the cause of all of

those misfortunes?”

Urk. Wel … excluding the one that happened a hundred years ago, Gourry and I were pretty deeply

involved with al of them. But that’s just it! To the very end, everything was caused by that fake sage and

the evil plans of the Mazoku! Gourry and I were just the victims they were prowling after!

“A-Anyway, the real problem is the Mazoku’s objective, right?” swallowing some lettuce I quickly changed

the subject.

Without changing his face, Mr. Milgazia answered, “We’l understand that when we go there.”

“Wel , yeah, that’s true but…Whoa, hold on there! The way you say that, you make it sound like you’ve

decided to go!”

“What?” Mr. Milgazia raised an eyebrow. “Were you not planning on going, human girl?!”

“Obviously! No matter how you think about it, it’s a trap! A trap! That’s the one reason we can’t go! Were

you just gonna casual y and optimistical y strol out there?!” I said while waving a knife around but Mr.

Milgazia didn’t even flinch.

“Even though you say that, do you think what happened in that other restaurant was unrelated?”

“…Huh?”

“The Mazoku that looked like a dead tree. It might have just chosen to attack that restaurant by chance,

but the one that appeared after that was obviously trying to obstruct him. They weren’t al ies. Then again,

if they were enemies, he wouldn’t have just hindered him. He probably would have attacked. But with that

action, it didn’t seem like the people around us– Or more likely, him–” He threw a quick glance in Gourry’s

direction, “–is what he was trying to protect.”

“Yeah… He didn’t show any bloodlust at al .” Pushing some bel pepper off to the side and wrapping a

piece of lettuce around some ground sausage, Gourry said as if he had nothing to do with any of this.

“The attacking Mazoku and the guarding Mazoku. If the one who is inviting you to Sairaag is also Mazoku,

then do you still think they’re unrelated?”

“W-Wel , when you say it like that… that’s… how do I say this…?”

“In the case that the two are related, if you decide not to go to Sairaag, the Mazoku will find a way where

you wil have no choice but to accept their ‘invitation.’ But now that we know the Mazoku are planning

something, Memphy and I wil be heading to Sairaag. There’s a chance that this might be related to the

recurrence of the demon outbreaks. We may not necessarily find any clues, but the fact is that we have

no other leads. We’ve already come to terms with the fact that this may be a trap, so you can come with

us, or we will go separately and the two of you can take a different path. However, if you choose the latter,

you’l be waiting for the Mazoku to forcibly invite you. You said there was no reason to go, and if they want

to act rashly, they’l create a reason. The quickest method would be with a hostage. In that situation, you

would be at less of a disadvantage if you just did what you didn’t want to do from the start. You can

choose the former or the latter, but I think there’s only one answer.”

“Ergh…. fi i i ne….” I said, summing up my decision to go to Sairaag in one word. That was the method

Hellmaster once used. Eventually he kidnapped Gourry while waiting for me to walk into his trap. If I

decided not to go of my own volition, there’s a high probability that the Mazoku would get frustrated and

use that method again, and I’l pass on that.

On that note, if I do go to Sairaag now, there is one advantage I will have: Mr. Milgazia and Memphy will

be there. When I first saw ‘me’ it was before we encountered the two of them. And today, the Mazoku that

came to the restaurant didn’t take a human form, which for Mazoku, takes a good amount of power.

Basically, just before they appeared, they hadn’t planned to face Mr. Milgazia and Memphy’s level of

power. If they had, they would have sent someone more powerful. Of course, today’s enemy had its own

back-up system, but there’s a good chance that those two wil work as an advantage.

Then its just as Mr. Milgazia said, the answer was already decided. I breathed a little sigh.

“…I understand. Wel , if we’re gonna go, let’s go.” I said in a tone of desperation as I stabbed my knife into

the ground sausage.

***

It seemed the strange weather had gradually subsided, however, the behavior of the demons was far from

settled. Day by day, they become more intense. We came across several of them along the road. In the

cities we went to, we heard rumors. Different kingdoms were dealing with it in different ways. More and

more, a full-scale movement was beginning. Or so they say.

In the Elmekian Empire, the best of the Gunginiel Knights had started overcoming the demons. In

Saillune, the royal princess had taken command and formed a subjugation unit. In Zephilia the Eternal

Queen's confidential unit, the Ceiphied Knights had started to move.

Yeah, those were al just rumors. Wel , if it's true that the Ciephied Knights were acting, I get the feeling

that *one in particular* could handle this whole situation alone. How much is the truth and how much is a

lie? But a lie is still a lie. Setting that aside, we arrived in Atlas City.

"Does it seem… like there are less people than there were last time we were here?"

"There are."

Gourry questioned as he looked around, and I answered flatly. It's

not unreasonable. There have been all

sorts of demon outbreaks and attacks around here.

“But this city– Didn’t you see it when we entered? Part of the city wall was destroyed. You should have

heard about it in the village we left from this morning. A little while ago, Atlas City was attacked by

demons.” After I said that Gourry thought for a bit.

“Oh! Now that you mention it, I did hear something like that!”

“You remember the strangest things.”

“Because I heard it at the exact same time I accidentally ate a piece of bel pepper.”

So that’s how you remember things…

Fortunately, for the scale of the attack there was only a small amount of damage, but the anxieties of the

people that lived in the city were really stirred up. That was clear when we entered the city space. There

were carts and street stalls lined up in a narrow place, just like they had been when Gourry and I were last

here. Right now it was more than just a little odd. A lot of the carts and street stalls were owned by people

who came from other towns and villages to sell their wares, but now that there were all these demons

wandering all over the place, there weren't a lot of people with enough guts to travel afar just to trade. So

of course, goods were thin, the total number of customers had decreased, and the city's energy had

withered.

As I was looking around at the sad state of business, my gaze stopped. There was a face I recognized

heading in my direction down the street. It seemed she noticed me and stopped– then came walking

directly toward me.

"Miss Lina, Mr. Gourry." Her hair, the color of sunset, swayed a little. She was as fragile as ever, but the

former shade of sadness in her eyes was no longer there. While I was a little confused I looked at her with

a smile.

"It's been a while. How have you been, Rubia?"

***

Her house was in an area away from the center of the city. It stood out on a vacant plot of land in an

almost desolate place. Her house– wel , it might be better if I said 'store.' There, she ran a small flower

shop. She told us that everything here was left to her by the sorcerer she formerly served. Rubia

explained everything on the road here, after everyone had introduced themselves. Rubia and I, the

circumstances of our meeting… Honestly, how we came in contact is fine, but there are some confusing

parts… but it didn't seem like she was consciously thinking of al that now. She was simply an

acquaintance who had invited us over to her house.

"Please, have some."

The inside of the shop was shrouded in green and the colors of assorted flowers. The scent of the tea

Rubia brought out floated through the air.

"I guess I'l try it." It had a wide array of unique tastes. Compared to other teas, the scent was fairly strong.

That made it feel like medicine to me so I didn't think I'd like it straight. "…That's delicious." I blurted. If

you added milk and sugar it would be fragrant, sweet, and mild but right now it had perfect balance. I was

fine drinking it just as it was.

"It's certainly not bad." Memphy could have been talking about the tea or the environment. Or both. It

seemed Memphy was satisfied, which is rare for Memphy to say. "I hope you're pleased with it." She said

with a grin. "There are plenty of varieties of flowers here, and

they’re very well taken care of. Then again,

they are al potted plants. You have quite the heartfelt attentiveness, for a human.”

We would happen to have an Elf in a place like this. In one glance she could look around the shop and

know the condition of all the flowers before giving a quick critique. Wel … Memphy herself likes to give

heartfelt attentiveness to al sorts of things… it seems…

“Thank you very much. I grow all of these flowers myself.”

“Then, you’re alone?”

“Yes.”

I ended up asking without thinking, but Rubia gave a carefree answer.

“But doing al of this alone, isn’t it real y difficult?”

“Wel , I’ve gotten used to it. It was my job to cultivate plants before.” She said.

Oh, that makes sense. To society, sorcerers seem like nothing but idiots who foolishly use their spells to

blow up monsters and vil ains without thinking, and there are a lot of people who think like that. But that’s

all just unjustified misunderstanding.

. . . . . .

Ahem. Clearly.

Okay, so no matter what I say I probably won't be persuasive enough, but it's definitely a firm

misunderstanding.

Magic is primarily the energy found in this world. Sorcery is using different methods to draw that energy

out of the world, and the study of its uses. Sorcerers are those who follow those teachings. So for

example, a simple spel like 'Lighting' takes a smal amount of memorization so anyone can use it, but you

wouldn't cal someone a sorcerer just because they could cast a Lighting spel . You need intel igence in

various areas, which at first glance may seem unrelated, but you can think of it as the art of making

connections between multiple conditions. In other words, you need also need wisdom.

Among the different divisions of sorcery, herbalism is a very important one. Medicinal plants are used in

various divisions for research and rituals. It would just be extremely inconvenient if every time you needed

a specific plant, you would have to wander through the fields where they grow trying to identify one. So if

you have the ability to cultivate them, you could grow them in your

own home. It would be really great

thing for a sorcerer to be able to do. Then if you pick them and there are some left over, an effective

method of conservation is to sell them to a magic item shop and you can earn some extra income. Two

birds, one stone. Since Rubia was a sorcerer's assistant, it's not so mysterious that her job was to

cultivate plants.

"Even so… doing all of this alone is real y amazing."

She seemed a little embarrassed. "Wel , compared to the cultivation of a delicate Mandragora, this isn't so

difficult."

…Mandragora? That doesn't sound very romantic…

"But…" Memphy looked around and knit her eyebrows. "It must be difficult to get so many flowers to

bloom out of season."

"Oh, for that we have a greenhouse."

"G-Greenhouse?!" I blurted out.

"What's that?" Gourry asked from the side. This time it wasn't unreasonable for Gourry not to know. I

myself have only read about it.

"Basical y, it's a house that has sheets of transparent glass for wal s

and inside you can grow flowers and

plants.”

“A-A house with glass wal s?!” Gourry said, shocked. Again, not unreasonable.

The glass we usually see is just stained glass in churches. Making a large, flat, and then highly

transparent piece of glass takes a skil ed craftsman and equipment, so natural y it’s expensive, but it could

be easily broken in an attack. If you put it together like a house, you can cultivate plants inside, but the

one who actual y does that can’t be unskil ed either. Then the first time the neighborhood brats mess

around and throw a rock at it, the damage would be considerable and it would be difficult to keep the

inside at a fixed temperature. It’s a lot of effort to put into something that’s so easy to break. Growing

plants in a structure made like that is something ordinary people can’t do, and an ordinary sorcerer

definitely couldn’t do. But if it was the sorcerer Rubia served, and it was built in a place where there

wouldn’t be any dumb brats throwing rocks, and there was an assistant there to help, those things would

ensure that it could be done.

“Is that true, Rubia?!”

“When you act that surprised about it, I can’t real y lie to you.”

“So you aren’t just saying something cool like you own a greenhouse, but you’re real y just pouring al

your money into an imaginary greenhouse, right?”

“I wouldn’t. That would be sil y. So then, would you like to see it?”

“Yes! Definitely!”

“I wanna see it too!”

“Should we fol ow them, Elder?”

“I honestly don’t know.”

Sitting beside Gourry and I, who were swelling with excitement, Mr. Milgazia and Memphy both tilted their

teacups and breathed a disillusioned sigh.

***

“Th-This is–!” Rays of sunshine rained down on Atlas city. In the garden behind Rubia’s home, there it

stood majestical y. “The legendary… Greenhouse!”

“…legendary?”

The rear garden was quite large. It was surrounded by trees and full of plots of cultivated land. There, all

kind of flowers and plants were growing. The surrounding trees might have actually have been there for

the sake of making medicine. And there in the center of it all– It was the size of a small hut, metal pillars

running across its length and width, inlaid with transparent glass, the inside gently wrapped in green

vegetation. This was evidently the crystal castle! …That's a slight exaggeration. This was… the

greenhouse!

"Hey, can I go closer?! Can I go closer?!"

"Wil you let us go closer if we promise not to stop breathing?!"

"Sure… that's no problem, but…" Rubia smiled awkwardly at the alternating questions from Gourry and I.

The two of us promptly and cautiously approached it.

"H-Hey! Can we touch it?!"

"What?! You don't need permission just to touch it! Here!"

Touch.

"Ah! Then me too!"

Pet.

"K-k-k-k-k… So you touched it Gourry…"

"What the hel Lina, didn't you just touch it?!"

"Fool! I'm wearing gloves!"

"But I'm… Ahh! My gloves are fingerless! Wait, was this a trap!?"

“Khahahahah! You’ve been caught, Gourry! If it’s cursed, then the curse is the fol y of your own! You

directly touched the greenhouse without permission! As compensation, it will take everything you know!”

“Um… you guys…?” Gourry and I looked back when we heard Rubia’s troubled voice. “It’s not real y

cursed… so please don’t be afraid, Mr. Gourry. You’re excitement is a little… excessive. I know you’re

real y happy but… Anyway, would you like to see inside?” At Rubia’s words, Gourry, who had been

trembling beside me, and I leaned in close with our eyes sparkling.

“Real y?! It’s okay? And you won’t charge us admission?!”

“I won’t, I won’t”

“And if we go in, we won’t be cursed?!”

“You won’t, you won’t.”

“WHOOOOOAAAAAA!!” Gourry and I screamed.

“What… are they so happy about…? Elder?”

“I don’t understand humans.”

Leaving behind those two, who for some reason were staying quiet, Gourry and I entered the greenhouse

with Rubia.

“Nywhoaaah! There are plants growing! Plants!”

“Wel … It *is* a greenhouse…”

“Whoaaaah! There’s a stone pil ar in the middle! A stone pil ar!”

“Yeah, when it’s cold we heat up the pil ar so it can continue to be warm inside the greenhouse.”

“Wow! Somehow, just by growing inside of here the plants seem even more special. They feel so noble!

See, like this one! Even the curve of the leaves are graceful!”

“Miss Lina, that’s a weed.”

“Amazing! This tree’s stil alive, but it looks dead!”

“Tree…?” Rubia frowned at Gourry’s words. “What tree…?” It seemed like she didn’t know what he meant

by dead–

. . . . . .

...Dead tree?!

“Rubia! Run!”

“Huh?” Rubia was confused, but Gourry sensed what was going on. Jumping to the side he picked up

Rubia and went running out of the greenhouse entrance.

The air howled and I heard something hard smashing. I followed after Gourry and Rubia, and from the

corner of my eye I could see the stone pillar standing at the center of the greenhouse breaking apart.

“What’s wrong?!”

“What happened?”

“Mazoku!” I shouted at Mr. Milgazia and Memphy as they ran toward me. I threw a glance toward the

greenhouse. “It the dead-tree looking one that attacked us before! Be careful!”

There was an open door and a broken stone pillar, but the one that should have just been there, the dead

tree Mazoku, was gone.

“Where is it?”

“It was there just now!”

Memphy frowned as she asked and I answered without looking away from the inside of the greenhouse.

“Wh-What was that?!”

“Mazoku! Rubia! Run to somewhere safe!”

“Somewhere safe…? Like where?” When she asked, I stood there unable to answer. When facing

Mazoku, there are no safe places. If she wasn’t careful about how she got away, the Mazoku might target

her.

“Just be careful!”

I felt a presence at my side. When I turned, I could see something

protruding from the ground before me,

which instantly took the shape of the dead tree Mazoku. The instant it appeared, in one breath, Gourry

closed the distance and cut down the dead tree Mazoku. But that didn't mean we could let down our

guard!

"Behind you!" Memphy cal ed and I jumped to the side with Rubia. Just after that, a wood colored arrow

flew past and stuck into the ground. Once again, the dead tree Mazoku revived. So then the arrow that

just came flying– There was one more dead tree Mazoku with the exact same form.

"What are we supposed to do about this?!"

"Calm down, Gourry!" I yel ed at him since he was so confused. "I have a theory that they're like the Red

and Gray Mazoku we saw at Dragon's Peak. Both are one! If you defeat only one, another wil revive!"

"If we just have to hit them both at the same, that won't be any problem." The one who said that and

followed after him, was none other than Mr. Milgazia!

"You said it! Crush them quickly now!"

Spreading out both of his arms, he aimed both hands at one of the two Mazoku. "OHHHHH!" Mr. Milgazia

roared and the ground shook. The two Mazoku, sensing danger, sunk into the ground– and came floating

back up again.

“You won’t get away.” Memphy’s white armor unfolded like wings as she howled. Using the power of

Zanaffar, she dragged the Mazoku from the ground– no, from the Astral Plane, back into the real world.

Mr. Milgazia released a ball of light from each palm to smash the dead tree Mazoku! –but only one of

them.

We al gasped a little. Just before one of Mr Milgazia’s attacks hit, it stopped. It wasn’t the dead tree

Mazoku. What suddenly appeared right then was the hand of a young man. From his appearance, he

seemed to be around the same age as Gourry. He had messy blonde hair and a common face, his

expression lacking any aspiration. He was tall and lanky, which was more of a compliment, but from his

outward appearance he didn’t seem very strong. It goes without saying that he wasn’t what he appeared

to be. Up until that instant, he hadn’t existed in that form. When he appeared he caught Mr. Milgazia’s

attack with his palm, which should have been powerful enough to

destroy pure Mazoku.

“This is a flower shop, isn’t it? That’s no good. Florists shouldn’t be bullying trees.” He said as if he was

playing dumb. His gaze shifted to Mr. Milgazia and Memphy. “Anyway… There was an Elf and a Dragon

here? I didn’t know about that. Hahahh, it’s because you used that ugly armor to hide your presence, isn’t

it?”

“Ug–?!” with his so bluntly pointing out the truth, Memphy automatical y raised her voice. But she knew

better than to show any weakness. She had already realized it. The one who appeared as a young man

before us was a powerful Mazoku on his own. Among Mazoku, the most powerful ones are able to

maintain human form.

“You don’t need to worry about the plants, but shal we increase the green?” He said in that playing-dumb

tone. In the hand he held out, a walnut– no, something that looked like walnut appeared. “See? Like this.”

He tossed it onto the ground and it made a ‘clack’ sound. It cracked and revealed what was real y inside.

It’s contents bulged out and swelled up, growing to the size of a human head. From there, some– several,

things that resembled bug legs extended out, making it to be about the same height as a human, like a

spider without a head– but saying that would be impolite to the spiders. It had multiple twisted legs

growing out of a pulsing, green, brain.

After the contents came out, all that was left was the shell. Once it was all together, it multiplied, taking the

shape of a humanoid mass of bones. I say humanoid, but you shouldn't think of it as a skeleton. It wasn't

cute. It wasn't the same style as a human frame. Just as I said it was a humanoid mass of bones. I don't

know what kind of frame it had, but of all the things not of this world, of the innumerable warped structures

it could take, it mimicked an entangled mess of a human form. That's the kind of thing it was. Fol owing

that, from the joints of its bones oozed some kind of green mucous. It goes without saying, but these two

were both Mazoku. Apart from whether or not they came from within a walnut or not, they had been called

from somewhere else with that as a signal.

"True, they're both green… but I don't particularly want them to increase or to get along with them."

"Now, don't say that. The cute green one is Vaidardz. And the green

one with the magnificent form is

Guon. …Oh wait, they're both green, aren't they?"

"It doesn't matter which one is which, because it doesn't change that they'l be leaving here as second-

rate Mazoku."

"What a terrible thing to say. For I, Bradu, both of them are my very special friends. It's no good to

discriminate against your opponent just because of their appearance. No good at all. For some no good

humans– We wil grant you death. Yes. That's decided." Just as Bradu said it, his lackey Mazoku went

into action!

There was a single weird cry, and the brain-bug Mazoku's legs moved. It looked like he was preparing to

move forward. Just for the record, I wasn't at al determined to remember their names! I chanted a spel in

my mouth and Gourry ran up beside me to cover.

"I'm not done." Mr. Milgazia released a bal of light at the thing coming toward him, but before it could

reach the brain-bug–

"Didn't I say you don't have to worry about the plants?" Bradu crossed space, and as if he was flicking

something with his fingers, he released a mass of energy from the

side and intercepted Mr. Milgazia's bal

of light. There was a flash and a sound like space being compressed. The attack caused the glass on the

sides of the greenhouse to shatter. I stopped dead in my tracks.

Nooooo! Not the greenhouse! Wait, this isn't the time to be saying things like that! Tearing through the

flash of light, a shadow approached.

"Useless!" Memphy's armor spat out a light, transforming the thing coming toward her into glitter dust–

which happened to be one of the dead tree Mazoku. A decoy?! That's what I thought. In our immediate

vicinity, the bone Mazoku appeared!

"You–!" Gourry swung his sword. As he made contact with it, the bone Mazoku's body scattered apart.

There was a great gush of green body fluid and– This is bad!

I had no basis for my reasoning, but I knew instinctively. This bone Mazoku's weapon wasn't magical

attacks, much less physical attacks. It was probably this fluid. With its body transforming into a number of

shards, it flew toward us, riding on the blast of its own explosion and putting itself together again. When its

body was broken apart by Gourry's strike, its unavoidable rain of body fluid was pouring right toward me!

That moment felt like infinity. My field of vision was almost completely full of the shadow of the green fluid.

And the next moment, the rain of fluid suddenly changed course and splattered on the ground beside me.

The ground it was showered over made a bizarre noise and fumes rose up. It seemed it was just as my

bad feeling had predicted. I thought that Mr. Milgazia or Memphy had probably done something, sensing I

was in danger.

“What?!”

After the traces of light had disappeared, Bradu’s astonished stare pointed away from us. Reflexively, I

glanced in that direction.

–Ugheh?! I automatically stepped backward. A red shadow moved a great distance, and grabbed onto the

bone Mazoku that had once again pulled itself together. I didn’t hear any screams, only the sound of

something hard breaking. Caught between muscle fibers, the cracking bone Mazoku let out a final

agonizing scream.

“Guon!” Bradu cal ed out, but there was no longer anything there to answer. As it was crushed, it

transformed into dust. The bone Mazoku was destroyed easily. He

died by the hand of the muscle

Mazoku beside me… sort of. It seems the one who protected me from the body fluid attack wasn't Mr.

Milgazia or Memphy, but the muscled Mazoku.

No matter how many times I see it, I just can't get used to this guy's appearance…

When we encountered him previously at the restaurant, he used that strange move, but… What the…?

Bradu was as ambitionless as ever, but his stare was heavy with hatred as he looked toward the muscle

Mazoku.

"So you feel like betraying us…?"

"I'l ask you the same thing."

The two glared at each other.

"What is the meaning of al this?"

"I have no idea." I answered Mr. Milgazia reflexively.

"I see… In other words, it's al a matter of who you hold highest in regard, hm?"

"It seems so."

"Hold on! What the hel is going on?!" I interrupted the conversation between Bradu and the muscle

Mazoku. For now, the muscle Mazoku didn't seem like a current

enemy, but…

“I have no reason to answer to the likes of Humans.” The muscle Mazoku said over his shoulder, disgust

mixed into his voice. Now I get it. He wasn’t currently an enemy, but he wasn’t an al y either.

“Wel , it doesn’t matter. Anyway, I have my intentions. If you get in my way, I’l make you disappear too.

That’s al .” Bradu made some arbitrary proclamation and called back his remaining minions– the brain-bug

and the two dead tree Mazoku.

Just then, my body shook. All the strength had been pul ed from my knees. Wh…?! *What the hell is*

this…?!

Not being able to endure it, I dropped to my knees. I couldn’t understand what was happening. I looked to

my right and left an d saw that Gourry, Rubia, and Memphy had also dropped to their knees where they

had been standing. Mr. Milgazia was barely managing to stand, but his legs were shaking. We were

definitely receiving some kind of attack but I didn’t know exactly what it was. It seemed like the muscle

Mazoku was unaffected, and he swayed as he ran toward the brain-bug.

Before he could reach it, a brown lance shot up from the ground and pierced the muscle Mazoku.

“Gaaaahhhhhh!” The muscle Mazoku screamed out. The lance that pierced the him extended into several

branches from inside his body. He didn’t even have time to give a final scream. In the end, he couldn’t tel

us anything about our situation. The muscle Mazoku burst apart and transformed into white ash in midair,

swaying as he dissolved away. The spear that defeated the muscle Mazoku, and the branches that

extended from it, entwined together– and took the form of a dead tree Mazoku.

A *third* one?! There weren’t just two?! From the muscle Mazoku’s movements, I somehow knew that the

unidentifiable attack was a trap laid out by the brain-bug Mazoku, but I didn’t know how.

Memphy’s armor deployed its wings and there was a low roar resounding through the area. At the same

time the strange condition that had overtaken our bodies ended as if it had never happened.

A howl shook the atmosphere and Mr. Milgazia produced a white-blue ball of light, aiming for the brain-

bug Mazoku. The light scorched the atmosphere, the brain-bug Mazoku’s pul ed in its legs. All of a

sudden, it halted in mid-air.

“My, my… I thought I’d final y found you…” Along with a voice, the light converged at a man’s palm and

disappeared. “Once again, you’re quick to cause trouble. Wel , that’s certainly like you, isn’t it?”

“Ugh…?!”

“Y-You?!”

Mr. Milgazia and I said in hoarse voices. But the one who called him by name, was Gourry.

“Xel os!”

***

The priest Xel os. Right. We knew this man. That inappropriate smile, those black priests’ clothes. At first

glance, he seemed like the kind of unidentifiable priest that should be working as kitchen staff but– He

wasn’t as his appearance would lead you to believe. He was under direct supervision of one of the five

retainers of the dark lord, Greater Beast Zelas Metallium. He was the Mazoku who wiped out several

military units of dragons at the tail end of the Kouma war, one thousand years ago. Excluding the dark

lord and his retainers, there were probably only one or two Mazoku who could compete with him. He was

also an opponent who Gourry and I were deeply connected with.

“Don’t chal enge him, Memphy.”

“Huh?”

Mr. Milgazia spoke quietly to Memphy, who wasn’t acquainted with Xel os.

“Ohh… this is, this is… I see… k-k-k-k-k-k…” Upon Xel os’ arrival, Bradu leaked out a suppressed laugh.

“It seems… you’ve decided to chal enge me, right!?” He said as he fired a bal of light toward us. But with

a wave of Xel os’ staff, Bradu’s attack easily scattered en-route.

“Wha–?!”

“Don’t get the wrong idea Mr. Bradu.” Xellos casually waked forward, placed his hand on one of the dead

tree Mazoku and looked at Bradu. “Actual y, I like being nice. You could say I’m like an opportunist from

one of those old folktales.” As he said it, Bradu was speechless. Wel , that’s definitely something Xellos

would say….

“In short, for me as an individual, I’m neutral. Wel , that’s probably saying enough.”

“Last time we met, didn’t you say at our next meeting, we’d be enemies?” Instead of Bradu, who had gone

silent, I threw my words at him. Xellos glanced at me.

“Wel , it seems circumstances have changed. On that note, I wouldn’t consider myself an al y.” He said

nonchalantly.

“I see… So? What are you planning this time? What’s happening in Sairaag?”

“That–”

“Is not a secret! Tel me. You owe me, anyway.”

“Owe you?!” Xel os raised an eyebrow. “Now, now, Miss Lina, I don’t know of any material thing that I

could possibly owe you.”

“Don’t play dumb! At a restaurant two days before we arrived at Gyria city, you didn’t have any smal

change on hand, so I paid two coppers for you! And don’t you try tel ing me I didn’t lend them to you!”

“H-Hold on! You stil remember something like that?!”

“*Something like that*?! Wait, then that means you do remember! If you remembered not paying this whole

time then that makes you guilty of a crime of conscience! Doing such a thing… I wonder how Greater

Beast would feel about that…?”

“Do you real y think saying such a little thing is threatening…? On the other hand, it does bother me that

you’re using Lord Greater Beast’s name like that…” He scratched his cheek as if he actual y was real y

bothered by it.

At that time, Bradu was on the side not moving except for a twitch. Wel , to be more accurate, he couldn’t

move. Probably. More than knowing how much power Xellos had, he wasn’t clear on Xel os’ plans, so he

couldn’t determine the best course of action.

“Wel , we can talk about the coppers later.” Xel os said as he looked in Bradu’s direction. “As for me, Mr.

Bradu, I think it’s very, very foolish for fel ow Mazoku to kil each other over something like this.”

“*Like this?* ” at Xel os’ unwavering statement, Bradu’s eyes fil ed with hostility.

“Please don’t misunderstand. By that I mean the lives and deaths of humans. Although right now my

standpoint is somewhat different from yours, I am Mazoku alone. Because even if we Mazoku weren’t in

such poor condition, I wouldn’t wish for you to unreasonably fight with humans, or though it may be

unlikely, be defeated by them. For now, I would appreciate it if you withdrew, for my sake.”

Bradu made a dark expression for a while. After alternating his gaze

between Xellos and the rest of us–

Without even a minute passing, along with the dead tree Mazoku and the brain bug, he dissolved into the

air. It seems he withdrew. From this place, for now.

“Wel then, well then… Ah. What’s this?” After Bradu left, Xel os surveyed the area. He looked toward the

nearby greenhouse as if he had just now noticed it. “This is rare. This is a greenhouse isn’t it? But it

seems a lot of the glass has been destroyed. Hahah… It must have been destroyed when Mr. Bradu

came after Miss Lina. Wel , you can’t say that this is *all* Miss Lina and the others’ faults. I wonder how

much a sheet of glass costs… And then until al the repairs are made, the plants inside will be affected. If

it stays like this it will cause a considerable amount of damage.”

“Wait… what are you trying to say, Xel os?”

“Oh, I didn’t mean anything.” He looked at me with that constant grinning face, “If I repair this, then what

we were discussing before, the debt of two coppers, will be settled?”

“Repair…?” Ordinarily, to repair something like this, two coppers wouldn’t even fix one of the metal poles

that make up the frame. But more than that and more than anything, the moment I heard the word ‘repair’

an image of Xel os dressed as a carpenter and wielding a hammer floated through my head. “Okay. I’l

leave it to you then.” I answered.

“Understood. Wel …” Xel os said and twirled his staff.

That moment, the numerous sparkling chips that had been scattered across the ground floated through

the air and gathered in the place they had been blasted away from. They started to glow orange, and after

the light disappeared, it was already just as it was before. Without even a crack, the sheets of glass were

as if nothing had happened. No, in fact it seemed the glass was clearer than before it was destroyed and

the thickness was more even.

Dammit, Xellos! What about my hopes of you dressing like a carpenter?!

“Is this… real y happening?” Memphy said dumbfounded. “He extracted only the glass components from a

limited range… and recombined them into the desired shape… Theoretical y it’s possible but… in such a

short amount of time… No, in only an instant…!” her sentences came out in smal chunks. Wel , even I

know that what Xel os did just now was pretty incredible. But for someone like Xel os, that wasn’t even two

coppers worth of effort… I wonder if I could even say that much?

“Wel … that’s roughly the same as you al had it.” Xel os said as he looked at Memphy with a smiling face.

There wasn’t any pride or sarcasm in his tone. His voice was…

solemn, actual y.

“Who…?”

“You should have heard his name, Memphy. It’s Xel os.” Mr. Milgazia said to Memphy. She was silent for

a moment and then, with a small gasp,

“The Kouma war’s– Dragon Slayer?!” When she said that, Xel os wagged his finger with a tut-tut.

“I don’t real y like such a ferocious nickname. I would be happy if you could call me ‘the mysterious priest’

or ‘the nice young man of unknown origin.”

“More like ‘looks like a cockroach from behind’ or ‘gofer Mazoku.”

“Miss Linaaaa….” He looked at me with a spiteful glare.

“Even so,” Mr. Milgazia began. He had a serious look and glared at Xel os without letting down his guard.

“You said you final y found someone. It seemed like you were planning something big. What are you

scheming, Gofer Mazoku?”

Whoa, he actually called him that.

“Please don’t cal me that! It’s Xel os! *Xel-los*!” From his protests he shifted his gaze to me. “Anyway, now that the greenhouse is repaired, my debt is repaid. And with that, regarding what we’re planning–” He

brought a finger to his mouth,

“It’s a secret, right?” Gourry interrupted.

“. . . . . .” For a moment, Xel os looked as if he was about to cry. “Mr. Gourry, you’re mean!”

he threw out that line like a little kid and disappeared as he crossed space. For a little while after that, all

that remained was silence.

“…Wh-what was that…” in the silence, Memphy stood open-mouthed, trembling in fear. “He’s different

from what I imagined but…”

“But he’s stil terrifying.” I said with a hard voice. “He’s the kind of guy who smiles while he slashes his

opponent’s neck, right in the middle of a pleasant chat.”

A cold sweat came to her forehead, but she couldn’t even flinch.

THREE: In His World, What We Encountered at the End of the Strange Space.

“…You’re leaving again?”

We were out in front of the small flower shop. Rubia spoke as if she was reluctant for us to leave. This

was just after Xellos had vanished into the air.

“Wel … currently we’re wrapped up in some kind of trouble that we don’t real y even know the reason

for…” I said as I scratched my head. “We have absolutely no idea

what the situation is, but… at any rate,

if we stayed here we might cause even more problems…”

“That wasn’t much of a problem.”

“Besides, if anything else happened to the greenhouse, our convenient repairman won’t just come back.

And it’s just–!” I clutched my hand into a fist. “The greenhouse is just a crystallization of human

civilization!”

“Crystal ized… civilization…?”

“For now, we have a task to take care of not too far from here. If we do this too slowly, nothing but trouble

wil continue flying after us. Wel , whatever happens, I’m real y glad that I got to see that you’re doing wel ,

Rubia.”

Rubia slightly averted her eyes at that. “…that’s not true.” she said with a thin sigh. “I was happy that I

could see you al after such a long time but… real y… I can’t forget about it…what happened back then…

”

…ah… it seemed like a deep fatigue was lurking in her eyes.

“Wel , somehow I did it.” She said with a smile, to conceal her sadness. “Please be careful and have a

safe journey. And if you have the chance, please stop by again, okay?” Rubia said, bowing her head in

farewell.

***

The impression of her trembling eyes was burned into me. I knew the reason for her sadness. Formerly

she worked for a sorcerer. But in order to stop him when he ran wild, by her own hand, Rubia… I wonder

what she felt for him. It wasn't hard to imagine. *But by her own hand…*

I can't forget about it. That's what Rubia said. What she was really thinking– I real y wouldn't know. But even so, she's alive today, and she'l choose which path she'l walk tomorrow. That's what I believe.

"Thinking something?" Asking from beside me, Memphy peeked at my face.

"Mm… No, just thinking about what we should do about dinner and an inn." I gave an appropriate answer.

Right now we had al left Rubia's house and had returned down the city's main street.

"Hmmm…" Memphy returned an appropriately vague response. "…I wonder if that girl wil be okay?

Although I didn't want to pry."

"What are you talking about?"

"Right, right. We were talking abou the inn." Playing dumb, I see. This girl… I real y don't like it when she

does such strange things at weird times… "Wel whatever we do, we

should probably decide at the

halfway point.” She glanced toward the sun that was slanting.

Actually, if we continue walking to the next town or city, the sun will gradually continue to slope, maybe

even faster than we can find an inn to rest at. Normally it would be okay to take it slow in this city, but we

were just attacked. If we stayed here we wouldn’t be able to rest peaceful y.

“We’l have to postpone that discussion.” said Mr. Milgazia, who at some point had stopped walking.

Gourry as well.

“Huh?” When Memphy and I turned to where they were looking–

…!

Right there. Amidst the pedestrian traffic that was even thinner than it was earlier, was a tall, lanky, young

man with an ordinary face and no ambition in his expression. Bradu?! This guy was supposed to retreat!

My body trembled. My strength was gone. The unknown attack from earlier…?! If I looked around, the

other people in the street were trembling and had dropped to the ground. Memphy’s armor howled. Our

affliction vanished.

“Rooaaargh!” Mr. Milgazia roared. The light he released flew in the

opposite direction, shaking the tops of

the roadside trees. A strange scream resounded and from within the greenery came (dropped) the brain-

bug Mazoku. There was a hole opened through its brain as if it had taken a direct hit. Its legs kicked

around for a bit but before long it stopped moving entirely. And like a dry sand-castle, it collapsed.

The other people in the street couldn't figure out the exact situation, but sensed there was trouble in the

air and went running and screaming. Afterward all that was left was us four and Bradu. On top of that, the

dead tree Mazoku were probably hiding somewhere in the area.

"That was pointless." Mr. Milgazia said to Bradu, who looked arrogant. "By rubbing several of its legs

together, it makes a sound which humans can't hear and causes that vibration attack. If you're a human

you can't see through it, but for Memphy and I, with our hearing it's possible to recognize it."

I see.. that's what that brain-bug's ability was. Realizing that, Memphy's Zanaffar armor made noise

causing the enemy's sound to disappear. If you understand the theory you can take care of it with minor

damage, but for human ears that can't hear it, its trick won't be

exposed. Of course that's only if the

opponent was only human. Actual y, if Mr. Milgazia and Memphy hadn't been here, I might not have

known how to deal with it.

"Whaaaat. Don't care, don't care." Bradu just frivolously and comfortably waved his hand. "Once I

understood that you had Dragons and Elves on your side, I already determined that Vaidardz would be

useless. It might seem like I was testing you but it's no good to think that way. Whether I'm alone or not,

instead of declaring war, I'l ask you to die without any itching or pain, okay?"

"Wasn't that your special friend?"

"That's right. He *was* my special friend." Bradu said jokingly to my attack."When my friend is defeated I'm supposed to turn my sadness into wrath and take revenge on our common enemy– is that the kind of

stories you like?"

"If I had to choose… I'd have to say I like stories where second rate villains leave their friends to die and

then get killed off themselves. Because those kind of stories make me laugh."

"…That's disappointing. It seems I was wrong about your tastes. But

first, you misunderstand. From my

perspective, I'm the protagonist. And of course, that makes you al the vil ains."

"You must be a pretty crappy hero then. Xellos just had to smile and you got shot down and ran away."

"Ahh. Back there, huh? Then let's have a return match right now, but at a little bit quicker pace."

"But your 'friend' just died. If you're the protagonist, you're heading for a Bad End."

"I wonder if that's true? Shal we check?"

"Even if we said no, would you stil plan on checking?"

"Of course." The moment he answered, the dead tree Mazoku broke upward through the stone

pavement– Three of them!

"Sorry, but I also knew you were planning that!" Mr Milgazia roared and produced three bal s of light. They

plunged toward each of the three dead tree Mazoku.

"Are you saying just because you knew my plans, you could defeat me?!" Bradu sneered and produced a

ball of light. It smashed into Mr. Milgazia's spell al at once. But just then, al three of the dead tree

Mazoku were blasted apart at the same time.

"We wil defeat you." Memphy said calmly. While Bradu was

preoccupied with Mr. Milgazia's spel ,

Memphy had sent out another attack from a different direction, destroying the three of them at the same

time.

"I though that would be useless." As Bradu said it, al of us immediately retreated from the area. With the

pavement breaking beneath our feet, we were jumping away from the tree spears that did in the muscle

Mazoku. The spears that pierced the space that we had recently occupied was transformed into four dead

tree Mazoku.

…wait. *There's one mooooore?!*

"See?"

The four dead tree Mazoku scattered and headed for us, each attacking a different person. Evading a

wooden arrow that came flying toward me, I chanted a spell in my mouth. Mr. Milgazia howled, Memphy

deployed her armor. Gourry's sword flashed– And three of the four Mazoku were struck down. But I hadn't

finished my spell in time to take care of the one I was in charge of. The one remaining shot an arrow–

Which three of them revived from.

“Hey! What are you doing?!” Memphy yel ed.

“Don’t get on me about that! It takes humans more time to recite a spel !” I somehow finished my spell and

we adjusted our timing.

“Elmekia Lance!” I shot it toward the dead tree Mazoku in front of me. Mr. Milgazia and Memphy released

balls of energy and Gourry slashed.

“Yes, disappointing.” Bradu casual y released a bal of energy which crashed into Memphy’s attack, and

deleted it from the field. After three of the Mazoku fell, the remaining one shot an arrow, which, as

expected, revived three more of them, exactly as it had happened before.

Shit. These guys on their own are nothing. Because they defeated the Muscle Mazoku, they occasionally

have the ability to wield considerable power, but their attack patterns are simple and their defense is low.

To be blunt, these guys are so awful that it would be presumptuous to call them pure Mazoku. The only

problem is their ability to revive. I don’t even know how many there could be, total. We defeat them and

defeat them but they pop right up all friendly like as if they were bamboo shoots.

…wait, it could be….!

While evading the enemy's monotonous attacks, I amplified my magic using the demon blood talismans I

wore. Then I recited a spell.

"Zelas Brid!" I created a band of light and aimed for the dead tree Mazoku directly in front of me. Just

before I hit my target, I changed course and aimed for Bradu, who was taking spectating for granted.

"What's this?!" Bradu dodged. The light pursued. Instantly, in the space between Bradu and the light, *a*

fifth dead tree Mazoku appeared. Of course the light couldn't avoid this one, so the poor dead tree

Mazoku who was forced to be his shield, was terminated.

"You thought that you could surprise me with that?!" Bradu ridiculed, but I just smiled back at him.

"No, just confirming something! Listen, everyone! Bradu is their main body! If we defeat him, they'l al

disappear!"

"Wha…?!" Bradu was shocked. I thought so. Bul 's eye!

Because the dead tree Mazoku had come after us from the very beginning, they seemed like separate

entities from Bradu, but that was a trick. Originally I thought there was a connection between the fighting

styles of the Red and Gray Mazoku and the dead tree Mazoku, but that wasn't true. The connection

between Bradu and the dead tree Mazoku was more like the one between Dynast General Sherra and

Dulgofa, who we fought previously. In other words, the main body and the ends it creates. They are the

same and yet separate beings. As long as the main dead tree Mazoku is the one infinitely regenerating, if

they lose their main body, they'l all disappear. When I saw the dead tree Mazoku appear so quickly I was

instantly reminded of bamboo shoots. By spreading its roots here and there, its life force sprouts up. In

that case, where are the *roots*? The answer was simple. Right in front of us. Bradu called the bone

Mazoku and the brain-bug Mazoku by names and said both were his special friends. Compare this to the

dead tree Mazoku who he didn't refer to by name and if they were his friends, then he'd have too many to

count. For that reason, wouldn't these dead tree Mazoku be no different from Bradu's own body? And

then Xellos. When he was talking to Bradu he specifically placed his hand on one of the dead tree

Mazoku. That was Xel os announcing to him that his tricks wouldn't work. That's what I was thinking.

Making it look like multiple dead tree Mazoku followed him was just a bluff. If you think of it that way it

explains their constant multiplication and regeneration.

“I see! Let’s believe that, human!” Mr. Milgazia produced a few– no, several balls of light which rushed

toward Bradu.

“K–!” At that moment Bradu swayed and shook. Memphy’s armor made the sound of flapping wings and

the shaking stopped. By that I mean she had stopped him from running away by crossing space. And

then– Boom! Impact! After the innumerable lights burst, the dead tree Mazoku– Sorry, Bradu’s burned

ends twisted and entangled together. Essentially he was using a shield and attack method. There, Gourry

charged in. He made several slashes then withdrew from the back. The moment the shield fell,

“Dyanst Brass!” My spell brought down a raging thunder!

“Gaaaaahhh!” Bradu screamed. Once the shield was completely busted, I could see Bradu’s form inside.

It was effective, but he stil wasn't dying. Mr. Milgazia howled and a bal of white-blue light appeared in his

hand

"W-Wait!" Bradu spoke in a pitiful voice. But who actual y waits when someone says that? "Don't you want

to know what's happening in Sairaag?!"

As you'd expect, Mr. Milgazia stopped. Yes… that would be pretty interesting to hear…

"It would be good if you didn't say too much." Suddenly I heard a voice.

Before Bradu could do anything, a black cone appeared in the air, and pierced through him vertically.

"This is–!" Mr. Milgazia cried. In that moment, Bradu's body turned white and was blown away like ash in

the wind. During that time, fragments of his shield, as wel as the stil active 'ends' met the same fate as

the main body. But by that time, the black cone that destroyed Bradu had already disappeared again.

"I knew you were stil there, *Xelloooooos*."

"Oh? You aren't very shocked, Miss Lina." The voice was nearby but I couldn't see him and it didn't sound

like it was coming from anywhere specifical y. I'd seen it once previously. That black cone just now was a

part of Xel os' real body or something.

"Oh wel . You did say you were neutral. But in your case, you aren't neutral because you don't want to

lend a hand to either side, it's because you're having too much fun watching other people's suffering from

the sidelines."

"That's… quite an accurate statement, actual y." There was wry laughter in his voice.

"You barged in because the decline in Mazoku isn't funny to you, but having nothing come of the plans

you put so much effort into is even less funny. You were lurking nearby with your presence hidden and

when you saw the state of things, you could either wait for Bradu to quietly retreat, or you'd shut him up.

But showing your presence would spoil your plans– You knew this would happen, didn't you?"

"Good deduction, Miss Lina. Very good ." Xel os said as if he was satisfied. Whenever this guy says

something in that tone, it's never a good thing… "Anyway, I'm done cleaning up our second-rate

protagonist. For now I will be happily taking my leave. And so Miss Lina, Mr. Gourry, I wish you a happy

journey to Saira–"

“Wait! Xel os!” I hurriedly shouted. But there was no longer anyone to answer my cal .

***

The journey was… fairly tolerable. Of course, al over the world the demon outbreaks and attacks

continued. We ourselves occasionally encountered stray demons, though we destroyed who-knows how

many. Of course around the first encounter it turned into a fight with pure Mazoku, but it was the kind of

issue where Mr. Milgazia easily defeated them. Generally in the world there are plenty of catastrophic

happenings, but compared to being targeted by a Mazoku of Bradu’s class, wel , how do I say this? I don’t

think I’d say it wasn’t usual y pretty calm… Wel , anyway, since we left Atlas City there had been

practical y no big disturbances. The mysterious priest Xel os hadn’t shown himself since. That guy

probably wouldn’t appear again unless someone like Bradu came to reveal information to us. Fol owing

that, my doppelganger– who was probably a Mazoku in disguise, hadn’t been seen since we started

heading for Sairaag. It was generally favorable, but that was only the story for now. From here on, that

wouldn’t be guaranteed.

Anyhow, Sairaag was right before us. We proceeded down the main road going through the dense forest.

The forest that surrounded Sairaag City was formerly called the Miasma Forest. There were no other

people heading down this road.

“Be on your guard, humans.” Mr. Milgazia’s abrupt warning came out tense. Previously, a strange miasma

wafted through this forest. It disappeared at one point, but now there was a different presence drifting

through the air. It wasn’t the presence of an attacker. If there was some way I could describe it, it was…

unpleasant. That being said, it’s not like there’s usual y a comfortable feeling in the atmosphere, it’s just…

how do I say this?… something thick was mixed in with the air. Something was bothering me and if I

dared to put it into words, it would be something like that. But it seemed Mr. Milgazia’s five senses were

different from human senses. No, he had super senses. And it seemed he knew the reason for this air.

“The atmosphere is definitely strange but… do you know the reason for that?”

“I don’t.” Hey! You didn’t sense anything. “I don’t know, but

something’s unusual. Actual y, it’s because I

don’t know that I’m tel ing you to be on guard.”

“But if you tel us to be on guard for something you don’t know…”

“I mean not to be careless.”

“I’m very aware of that.”

Of course I wasn’t *planning* on being careless in a situation like this. We have no idea why the Mazoku

invited us to a place like this but things definitely weren’t going to develop into them serving us crackers

and cake. Even though we hadn’t entered the city, we had technical y entered Sairaag. In that case it

wouldn’t be strange if we were ‘welcomed’ around here.

“Someone’s there.” Gourry said just as we were discussing all of this.

Following his gaze to the space in between the trees and a bend in the road, there was nothing to be

found. But looking a little further from there, I hadn’t seen it until now, but in the shadow of the trees, the

figures of two people standing in the road entered my field of vision. I noticed something. We had stopped

right where we were, but the other two were just patiently standing there, looking at us. They were waiting

for us. Undoubtedly.

They weren’t very far from us. Both of them were women, looking to be about 20 years old. One woman

had a large build and short blonde hair that shined like the sun. The look in her eyes wasn’t quite harsh

and she was dressed like an ordinary traveler. She didn’t have any weapons or armor, but from out of

nowhere I got the impression that she was strong. As for the other girl, she was delicate, with long flowing

jet-black hair. The first thing I noticed was that her blue dress was made of expensive material. It wasn’t

gaudy, but it had a stable design and was clad in numerous decorations.

Aside from the blonde one, from the way the black haired-girl looked, these two couldn't have been

travelers. If she went traveling dressed like that, she'd immediately catch the eyes of bandits. If not that,

the hem of the dress would be worn away by roadside weeds or something, and within two days you'd be

wearing nothing but rags.

"We've been waiting for you." The one with black hair said in a quiet voice. It wasn't with a malicious or

hostile tone, but it wasn't a heartfelt welcome. It was a practical greeting.

"…who are you? Or do I even have to ask?" I said myself, with a grin. Going by their appearance and their

presence they seemed human, but since it was Mazoku that summoned us here, and they were waiting

for us, that meant… You only had to think about it for a second and you'd know their real identities.

"Who are they?" Gourry asked me from the side.

Could you maybe think a little bit? No, even if Gourry thought about it he stil wouldn't know.

"You may think of us as receptionists if you like." The black-haired one said, either in response to my

question or Gourry's.

Receptionists…? That's an answer I didn't expect.

"I apologize for you to have come here after such great lengths, but Sir Dragonlord and Lady Elf, wil have

to please wait here." This time the blonde spoke, in a strangely formal voice. Memphy, I could understand,

but they saw that Mr. Milgazia was a Golden Dragon disguised as a human. Even for Mazoku, our

opponents must be pretty powerful.

"Our invitation was for Lady Lina Inverse and Sir Gourry Gabriev."

I gave a little snort. "Excuse me, but if you say 'please let us divide your forces here' do you real y expect

us to say 'oh, yes we understand' and obediently listen? That wouldn't be of any benefit to us."

"Our task is for Lady Lina and Sir Gourry. If they obediently wait here, Sir Dragonlord and Lady Elf will not

be harmed."

"If that's how it is…"

"You don't need to tel us."

Stepping in front of us was Mr. Milgazia and Memphy. They stood in the way of the two girls as if they

were protecting Gourry and I.

"Memphy and I won't be harmed? That's the same as saying if we turn back, the two humans wil be."

“I don’t know what sort of hateful task you have for two people like this, but in this case I won’t let them

accept your invitation.”

People like this? Hey. Memphy. Right now you’re even ruder than the blonde girl tacking ‘sir’ and ‘lady’

onto our names. God, this girl.

“Hmmm…” The blonde held her tongue as if she was troubled.

“It wouldn’t make nay sense to explain everything.” The black-haired girl said in a contrastingly cheerful

tone. “We knew it might turn out this way from the start.” she said and snapped her pale fingers. Instantly,

Memphy and Mr. Milgazia who had been standing right in front of us, were suddenly far away. No, it

wasn’t just those two. The two Mazoku that were in front of us, and the scenery.

“What the…?!” a surprised voice leaked out of Gourry’s mouth as he stood beside me. My distance from

Gourry hadn’t hanged. It’s not that Gourry and I had run backward from the others. This strange situation,

I happened to have some knowledge on.

“Space intervention?!”

Before we had moved very far from them, I had heard Mr. Milgazia’s

voice. That's it… Previously, in the

struggle among Sail une's royal family, we encountered a phenomenon like this. It wasn't as sudden as

this time, but I was pul ed far away from the person in front of me and no matter how fast I ran I couldn't

catch up. It was just like a scene common in dreams. And then I noticed I had been thrown into a strange

space that didn't exist anywhere. What happened just now was the same as that phenomenon. Currently

Gourry was beside me 'running' as if he was trying to catch up with Mr. Milgazia and the others. But it was

like his feet were stopped in that place and he couldn't move away from me.

"We won't let you!" In the distance I could see Memphy's armor unfolding into six wings. There was a low

buzz like the chirping of insects.

"Rrraaaaaghhh! And then Mr. Milgazia's voice. He was casting a spell that a human couldn't pronounce.

We were quickly being pulled from the scene, getting farther and farther. That was all. At the speed we

were traveling it must have been too late, and our situation hadn't changed for the better.

"What…?!" Mr. Milgazia's voice was ful of fright. That's when I

figured out what had happened. The black

haired girl had intervened with the space and Gourry and I were carried away to some strange place, at

which point Mr. Milgazia and Memphy had tried to eliminate the interference. Basically we had forcibly

been sent to a strange space with no stable objects around.

When I was brought to a place like this in Saillune, I was able to escape by summoning a dove. Basically

by creating a link to the original world, that unstable space burst like a soap bubble and I returned to the

real world. But the sorcery strengthening equipment developed by the Dragons and the Elves– Ritual

Armor and Zanaffar Armor, which was worn by Mr. Milgazia and Memphy, couldn't even stop the

interference around two humans. The space intervention which should have been unstable, couldn't be

broken.

From the look of things, that power was used by the one with black hair. The blonde one only looked at

her with disgust.

"That was unreasonable. I only said that just in case. We don't need to involve the Dragon and the Elf."

"Oh. If that's how it was, you should have just gave the order." I

could hear the blonde and the black-

haired girl talking. “If you were just giving a warning…”

Pop. All sound vanished. The sky widened. The green of the trees was far away. Beneath our feet, the

naked ground spread out rapidly. A moment later, Gourry and I, just the two of us and nothing else, were

the absolute only ones standing at the center of the ground.

“This…?!” After several steps forward Gourry was standing still. A while ago he had been running non-

stop, but in the end, he was just where he started. “Wha… What the hel is this?!” Gourry shouted,

astonished and unable to understand what was going on. “There weren’t even places like this in Elmekia!”

Around us there were no forests or trees and you couldn’t see anything, not even mountains. It wasn’t a

desert, just perfectly level ground. There wasn’t a single plant growing and there was absolutely no sign of

life. If you looked around, there was an almost transparent blue sky without a cloud floating through it. And

then. All around was that indescribable uncomfortable feeling that filled the air in the forest. But here it felt

like the atmosphere was even more concentrated.

I knew it was futile, but from the very beginning I had cast a

summoning spell to call forth a dove as a test.

It’s wings flapped and it set off into the empty sky, vanishing at the edge. I knew it. It wasn’t effective.

Compared to the time in Saillune, either the one who made this world was more powerful, or through

some method the space was made stable.

“What are you doing Lina?! This isn’t the time to be releasing doves! Get scared! Panic! Where the hel

are we?!”

“Calm down, Gourry. This is just a different space.”

“A different space?!” Gourry shouted and looked al around again. “Then, where is it?!”

“Wel … that’s… How do I put this…”

“Sairaag. That’s obvious.” Our answer came from the side. Gourry and I turned at the same time.

Before there hadn’t been a single presence, but now, there was a red shadow standing there. The color

was a bit off, but it reminded me of a god of death, wrapped in a red cloak with a hood and wearing a

smooth white mask to cover its face. There was no mouth or nose, and in the place where the eyes would

be were two sparkling red jewels.

I-It can't be…! I knew there was sweat collecting on my brow.

"This is in the same place as Sairaag. It is, so to speak, another world piled on top, partitioned off by a

paper-thin layer. This is a temporary world I created.

You can't be…

The question froze in the back of my throat. I didn't want my guess to be affirmed. I couldn't feel any

presence from our opponent, and he wasn't trying to hide it. Our opponent's presence had naturally

melted into the strange air around us.

"Here, the world is ful of magical power. Magic is essential y this world's energy. Because the difference

between this world and your original world is a only a thin layer, that thickness, serves as a weak

boundary between this world and various other worlds. Consequently, the atmosphere is full of magic

power. You both felt it before. This world is overflowing with that power."

Now I get it. That uncomfortable feeling was concentrated magic energy. The red death god continued

speaking. “As long as you’re in this world, girl, your blade of emptiness won’t disappear after an instant.

You don’t need an incantation for that spel , al you need is the power of your own wil and the chaos

words to invoke it. Boy, the sword you have, it feasts on your surroundings. Passing that on to the

sharpness of the blade, you can wound me. In other words, I have provided you with the power to destroy

me.”

“Just what… are you trying to do?!”

“This is a rite!”Answering Gourry, the red shadow spread his arms wide and proclaimed clearly. Under his

cloak were deep crimson robes. “I told you! *When you last destroyed me*!”

I knew it!

There was a grinding sound. It was the sound of me grinding my own molars together.

“It is already our second meeting. This time I have prepared for our encounter! And here is where I must

defeat you! This is where I return the world to nothingness! But it will be all too easy to defeat you. But

that’s not the whole reason. You once had the power to defeat me. When I defeat you, I will regain the

qualification as the King who will destroy this world. That is why I invited you to this world., to this place.

The miasma left behind by the magic beast of old. The vengeful ghost left behind by Hellmaster. The

quaking of the world left behind by our Golden Mother. Using those things I composed this world."

"…I get it." This time I somehow managed to speak. "…but… your tenacity is quite boring… for *the King of*

Mazoku."

"It's because I'm the King." with a single sway he stepped forward. As he took that one step Goury and I

instinctively took a step back.

"I don't want to stand here socializing too much… and it's not just because you gave us some kind of

advantage."

"Oh, no. I want to socialize." Slowly, he removed his right hand from beneath his cloak. A black hand

peeked out from the sleeve of his red robes, grasping something that looked like a root. "You're

advantage is nothing. I created and sustain this world. If you win, this world will crumble and you may

return to your original world. That is, if you can win against I, Ruby Eye Shabranigdu.

***

Ruby Eye Shabranigdu. In an ancient era, gambling on the continuation or destruction of the world, he

fought with Flare Dragon Ceiphied and his body was divided into seven parts. That is the legendary

sealed dark lord. However. Gourry and I knew that that wasn't just a legend. A little more than two years

ago. Right before our eyes, a shard of the dark lord sleeping within a human was awakened.

But not everyone he met then was here right now. I knew what the dark lord was saying. Aside from

Gourry and I there were two others there at the time. Right now, one of them was traveling under a sky we

don't know. And it goes without saying, the remaining one was the body of Ruby Eye Shabranigdu. Who

of course was right in front of us now.

"It doesn't real y matter, but did you real y need to bring us out here without any sort of context?" Though

my voice was hoarse, it somehow came out sounding like a joke. "We also… under these circumstances

would have liked to mental y prepare!"

"I don't know about things like that." He said taking another step. The dark lord proceeded to walk forward.

That, was the beginning of the battle. No longer able to endure the pressure, Gourry and I simultaneously

jumped to the left and right.

“Elmekia Lance!” I yel ed the chaos words without reciting an incantation. More than attack, it was to

confirm what the dark lord said. The spell was invoked! Except the lance of light that floated in the air was

glowing stronger than it ever had when I normally used it.

“GO!” In accordance with my voice, the magic light shot toward the dark lord! The dark lord struck the

ground with the root he held in his hand. From the edge of the root, a red jewel about the size of an

infant’s head appeared. With a smal exhale, the dark lord raised the root with the jewel at the end. It gave

off a thin glow and my lance of light dissolved into mist and vanished.

That root… No, that staff. That causes the dark lords actions.

Without a sound, Gourry drew his sword and closed in on the dark lord. He was fast! The sword should

have been able to tear a demon to pieces, but just as if he hadn’t been able to touch the red shadow, the

dark lord caught it with the staff in his hand and repelled it. That staff is probably– The dark lord’s weapon,

The Starving Bone Staff.

The name is left behind in legends as the staff of the dark lord. This was also probably like Sherra's

sword, Dulgofa, and was part of the Dark Lord's body. He used it to repel the sword as if he had switched

to swordsmanship and immediately Gourry sent out his next slash. Without using enough force to kill, the

dark lord went to repel it and strike Gourry at the same time. Even though it looked like a staff, if this was

the weapon of the dark lord, it was hiding its destructive power and wasn't a common item. What do you

think would happen if the human body received a blow like that? Gourry must have realized that and

changed the trajectory of his slash, blocking the movement of the staff and jumping back, widening their

distance. Attack and defense in a mere instant. Both of them were incredibly fast.

For Gourry and I, if we hadn't received the basics of the sword, the scene would simply look like sword

clashing with staff and then separating, but it wasn't like that. I knew from looking that he had used some

kind of swordsmanship to open the distance. To that degree they were able to fight, but it was a difference

between heaven and earth. If it were me exchanging blows with the dark lord, I probably wouldn’t even be

able to keep track of how many times I got smacked down. The dark lord moved forward as if he were

following Gourry as he retreated. He attacked Gourry with a big sweeping stroke. Gourry lightly jumped

back and I thought he had avoided it. But with a wave of the staff, miasma was produced– No, magical

wind was cast over Gourry.

"–Gh!" Gourry was blown away. The dark lord went running after him. He would probably wait for him to

lose his balance when he landed, and then attack. I couldn't let that happen! In the moment where the

distance between Gourry and the dark lord was widened, it was very possible for me to cover him! I

placed my hand on the ground.

"Astral Vine!" I used a *weapon strengthening* spell– technique on the earth. Originally this is a technique where you can increase the power of a sword or something so that it can inflict damage on Mazoku. I

used it on the ground around us. Not understanding what I was doing, the dark lord turned his caution

toward me. And then, I placed my other hand on the ground.

"Earth, hear my command! Dug Haut!" Responding to my voice, numerous spikes rose from the earth and

stretched toward the dark lord! Of course, had I done this normally, they would only be masses of dirt.

They wouldn't have the power to scratch a Mazoku. But right now they were carrying the power of the

Astral Vine I had used just before.

“Ch!” The dark lord stopped and raised his Starving Bone Staff. The jewel gave off another dim light, and

the lances of earth filled with magic power turned into piles of dirt. Immediately, the masses of dirt

crumbled and Gourry headed forward! A silver light flashed. He assaulted the enemy leaving white traces

in the air. Because of his abrupt charge, the dark lord was a bit overwhelmed.

Suddenly, a black mass of something started to spread from around his chest. Ever alert, Gourry

retreated back. The blackness dispersed and a crimson shadow leaped out. Gourry’s sword clashed with

the edge of the staff that came toward him, and some kind of pressure propelled his sword away.

A look of shock flitted across Gourry’s face. Riding on the force of his sword being warded off, he just

barely avoided the plunge of the staff. He jumped back til he was at my side. Slowly, Shabranigdu looked

toward us. Gourry whispered to me without taking his eyes off of him.

“Lina! Try driving something into the guy’s chest!”

“Got it!” I answered and placed my hand on the earth “Dug Haut!”

On the ground between the dark lord

and I, I created another volley of spikes heading toward the red shadow. Ruby eye readied his staff

against us. Our vision was mutually obstructed by the spikes. And one more round!

“Dug Haut!”Rising from the ground like giant tidal waves, they closed in on the dark lord. And it was like

Gourry was riding them to the top. The dark lord must have used some mystical power with his staff to

turn the spikes into waves of sand, which crumbled arouns him so that I couldn’t see. Running and kicking

across the sand waves, Gourry jumped.

“What are–!” Gourry’s voice rang through the air. What are you going to do if he notices you!? Sure

enough, the spikes I raised returned to dirt clods and the dark lord resurfaced, preparing himself against

Gourry. Gourry didn’t pay it any mind and yel ed in an angry voice.

“What the hel are you doing?! I’m talking to you!” From that one roar, Ruby Eye appeared shaken. The

dark lord drew back slightly and Gourry’s sword carved a silver streak in the air. He got him! But, the cut

was shal ow. The dark lord held his mask with his left hand, Gourry didn’t move.

“What are you doing in a place like this…? Tel me!” Gourry asked angrily, but the dark lord didn’t move,

nor did he answer. Gourry continued talking. “Your fighting style hasn’t changed much. Your

swordsmanship is the same as before. Using darkness as a smokescreen, entwining your weapons in

wind–!”

…w…ind…

His shoulders dropped. The dark lord breathed a deep sigh. And then in a weary– in an exhausted voice,

“So you knew… here I was thinking you wouldn’t figure it out. I guess you real y are perceptive…”

“…gh!” I took a smal gulp. That voice, it wasn’t the dark lord’s. It was a voice that I, that Gourry and I,

knew well. He removed his left hand from his face. The mask that Gourry had cut in two dropped to the

ground.

“…Luke?” I spoke his name in a hoarse voice.

FOUR: Demon Slayers

Pregnant with wind, the red cloth fluttered into the air. As he flung away his cloak, it fell to the ground in

front of him. Its outline blurred into the air and disappeared.

“Somehow… You saying it al at once like that made it hard to

move.” He muttered in his usual tone.

Casting away the robe he was wrapped in, he had changed into casual clothes and lightweight armor. It

was Luke, just as he always was. But the third change, besides the staff in his hand and the color of his

clothes, was his fire-red hair.

“…Oh, this?” Luke realized I was looking at him and gave a bitter smile. With his left hand he messed with

his hair. “I’m actual y a redhead. I dyed it. …she said she didn’t like redheads…” he was behaving the

same way as always, but somehow lonely. “But… I give up. Wel , since you two are so perceptive I think

you might have noticed but… It was pretty easy to see through, though. This is hard to do but I can’t real y

help it.”

“…why…?” I final y was able to ask, my voice cracking. “Why..? Why this…? What on earth…?”

“I guess I’ve been found out…” He said like a kid whose prank had been exposed. But somehow it

sounded unpleasant. “There was another being within me. I didn’t even notice it but I bet you probably

knew, since you were there when Rezo Shabranigdu was half-awakened.”

We were– We never told Luke and the others the details of that time. Even though he knew we had

defeated the dark lord, he shouldn't have known whose body he was occupying. That is, unless the seven

fragments of Ruby Eye had a shared consciousness. *He was another fragment.*

He continued speaking. "But unlike that time… I got what I wanted… Right now, my ego–"

"And my ego–"

"Are perfectly one."

The two voices alternately came from the same mouth. Luke's voice… and the dark lord's voice.

"Is this… a joke…?" unconsciously, my whisper leaked out like wind. "But… your eyes…"

"My eyes…? –Oh. That's a misunderstanding, from the name Ruby Eye. For Rezo Shabranigdu, it wasn't

actual y sealed within his eyes. It's sealed within the hearts of men. That time, he swal owed the

philosopher's stone which unleashed a shard of demon's blood and magnified his magic power. That's

how it was released. In my case–" There Luke cut himself off and took a deep, deep breath. "It's just as

you said…" He looked at me with a quiet expression. "The hate

didn’t vanish… No matter what I did. I left

Sellentia City. I was going to forget about everything. But… it was no use… I kept remembering… that

moment… I thought time would solve everything, but that wasn’t true.” The moment he said it… Luke’s

gaze, was the same as Rubia’s back in Atlas city.

I can’t forget about it. Rubia carries a curse of love and self-loathing. And because Luke is cursed with Hatred…

“I don’t resent Kereth anymore… but I realized… I resented humans, the entire world over.” He wasn’t

looking at me. He was gazing off somewhere far in the distance. Somewhere no one could ever reach.

“That time I realized it… Within me, there was one other sleeping… And for my wish, I become one with it.

That’s how it was.”

“….why…?” leaked from my mouth. There I was asking another dumbfounded question.

“Luke.” Gourry said quietly, and much more clearly than I could have. “That entire incident was caused by

Mazoku from the very start. Did you know that?”

“Yeah. I knew. I figured it out once I was able to think about it calmly. Because that Zord bastard was a

composite Mazoku, I thought it wouldn’t be weird if that was the

case. But y'know… I wonder if that's why

I hate the world so much. If you think about it, human-Mazoku composites were once human. And though

it's out of his character to play cheap tricks, that Dynast moron who we I guess I was oddly linked with,

was also a Mazoku."

"Tricks…?"

Luke nodded at me."That Grausherra guy was only dodging the question when he said they were 'just

having a meal.' But that's not what that chain of events was about. One thousand years ago, Phibrizzo

was guilty of the same thing. Their incentive for fighting was to awaken the dark lord sleeping within a

human… His plan, if you can cal something that stupid a plan, was just a rough gamble."

…that's… it….

…that's how it was… Everything was– I finally felt like I understood.

The reason why Sherra kept lending out a sword that consumed humans. The reason for that smile in her

last moments. That was it. The general created that sword just so she could find the soul that couldn't be

corrupted by it. In other words, it was a ritual to find the one the

dark lord was sleeping within. And at the

moment of her death, she found him. A human who could hold the demon sword Dulgofa in hand without

being corrupted– Luke. That satisfied smile, that was her method of reporting to Dynast– through her own

death.

Consequently, Dynast Grausherra caused a disaster in Gyria city in order to call us back to the town some

days after we left. He specifically turned an acquaintance of ours into a composite demon and sent him

after us because he knew it would bother us and it would be difficult to fight. And in the midst of the

complication and the hatred, the demon lord's soul would be awakened. That's what he was thinking. He

wasn't factoring in Mr. Milgazia and Memphy's participation in the battle, so at the time the Mazoku's

attack was severely lacking.

Back then I thought they were just playing with us. I was wrong. The battle was an extreme situation

where they needed to awaken the dark lord sleeping within Luke. To the very end, their priority was

awakening him, but it would all be for naught if they accidentally killed him. For the Mazoku it probably

took an impossible level of skil to fight humans when there's such a fine line between going easy on them

and getting the job done. They didn't know the extent of our power. On the other hand, by no means could

they kill us, even though their own power was weakening. As a result, we were victorious and the dark

lord's soul within Luke was not awakened. That ended up happening in a completely unrelated incident.

With the death of his beloved.

Hatred. The significance of that being it was done by a human, not Mazoku. And Ruby Eye Shabranigdu's

soul was awakened.

"I resent humans. I resent Mazoku. And since both of them exist there, I resent the world. If I unleash the

other part of myself from the north, we could destroy a portion of this world."

One more in the north– During the Kouma war, one thousand years ago, in exchange for the destruction

of Aqualord, he was sealed in magic ice. Now they say he sleeps in the Kataart Mountains, one more

piece of Shabranigdu. They cal him 'The Demon Lord of the North.' If two of the seven pieces of the dark

lord are awakened, it may very well be possible for them to destroy

the world.

“Mazoku wish for destruction. Once the world is destroyed, we wil destroy ourselves and eventual y

everything wil return to chaos. That wil be my revenge on the world.”

“But… because of this world you were able to meet Milina. Am I wrong?”

“Yeah… that’s true… You said it.” just like always, exactly like always, Luke awkwardly scratched his

head. “Because of that… I don’t real y know. To be honest… I like you two. More than anyone in the

world, you guys were really great. But more than that, the fact is there are a lot of people I don’t want

anything to do with. I hate the world. That’s the truth. But I real y don’t know what to do. That’s why I

cal ed you two here. I created a ‘world’ where you could defeat me. Either the world will be destroyed or I’l

drop dead right here. Which is the right way? We’l find out.”

“You aren’t joking…” I wrung the words out of my throat. I averted my eyes. “And you want us to go along

with something like this…” I had final y figured it al out.

This is why Xel os was specifical y neutral. That’s why he stopped Bradu with a piercing blow. To achieve

the Mazoku's primary duty, they couldn't afford for Gourry and I to meet with the newly revived dark lord. If

by a one in a million chance, humans were to defeat the dark lord, the Mazoku would be set far back from

achieving their goal– the destruction of the world. But then, previously Gourry and I had received that one

in a million chance. In that case, the best thing to do was to obliterate us before we arrived here.

However, that probably piqued Xel os' interest. He knew our former friend had been awakened as the

dark lord. And when it got to the point where we couldn't fight anymore, Gourry and I would indicate what

kind of reaction there would be. That's why he took a 'neutral' position. That's probably why he did. What

a horrible personality… as usual…

"I'm sorry. I real y am.…"

"You are not sorry! What the hel ?! There were weird Mazoku coming after us, Xel os was sent after us, I

had an imposter fluttering around– Was that al your doing?!"

"Yeah… But I'm glad you came. I had to do it that way since you're so perceptive. You might have

realized something on your way here. And if I had traveled with you here myself, it would probably be to

hard to fight, for both of us. …I didn't think there was any way you could have realized it just from my

fighting style… But anyway, I asked some others to guide you. Like the girl with black hair at the entrance.

I left the means up to her. But, I guess the one sealed in ice in the Kataarts wasn't too happy about us

meeting. Wel , since he's trapped in ice, he can barely even communicate. But his feelings were

circulated, and it really disrupted his underlings. So to respect his will, I decided to let you two determine

how things will turn out and I ordered the others to keep you safe until you reached here. I guess that got

weird for you, but hey, it seems you arrived safely."

"…What do you mean, 'safe'…" Upon saying it I realized something. "Wait a minute. You said 'safe' but…

who were those two 'receptionists?' They seemed pretty powerful. Are Mr. Milgazia and Memphy gonna

be okay?"

"Yeah. They'l be fine. They were considered in my conditions with the guy in the north from the

beginning. But I instructed that the entrance to this world would be closed and erased. Probably right now

you don't need to worry about the the old Dragon fart and the picky

Elf.” he said and a mischievous smile

came to his face, no different from usual.

“…then that’s fine.”

“Then–” Gourry interrupted. “The demon outbreaks and the strange weather– Are those also your doing?”

“Not exactly.” He shrugged his shoulders. “The subordinates aren’t a big deal. One of the effects of me

being awakened is that everyone’s power increased. They were just having a frolic in celebration. It’s not

real y my responsibility to stop them, so I just left them alone. That’s al . The strange weather– maybe it’s

a side-effect of creating this place? I wasn’t real y paying attention to it.”

“I see…” he said and then paused.

“Hey…” The silence that was born was broken by Luke. “Shal we start soon…?”

“. . . . . gh.” I took a smal gulp.

I know– knew. I knew that. I knew that at some point Luke would say that. That’s why he cal ed us here.

This was a rite. This was Luke’s farewel to the world. He said he liked us. Fighting with us, either he’d

meet his end by our own hands, or he’d put his hand to use. At any rate, he was parting from this world.

“…Luke…”

“I’ve already decided…” He said, somewhat lonely. Somewhat refreshed.

“Bul shit! You decided on your own! Suddenly–! If you just suddenly say something like that I can’t just

agree! Isn’t there… Isn’t there some other way?! Anything?!”

“…I don’t believe in destiny. If I said I’d leave this up to destiny, I’d just snort through my nose and find a

loophole. If I did that, the dark lord possessing my consciousness would use force. But y’know, this isn’t

destiny. And this isn’t the wil of Shabranigdu, the one sleeping within me. This is my own decision. No

one else’s. If I fight with you, I’l come to a conclusion. Of course, if no matter what, you guys don’t want to

fight, I don’t plan on forcing you. You’ll return to your original world and I’l unleash the dark lord of the

north and destroy the world. If I happen to come across you again en route, at that time, we will encounter

each other as enemies. How does that sound?”

“How…?” I couldn’t answer. Luke said this is what he wanted, but I can’t risk al of our lives in battle. But if

I say no, Luke said himself, he’d destroy the world. I can’t choose either.

“That’s… too extreme! If you want Gourry and I to do something like this, you can’t force us to choose

between those two options! I won’t accept that! Other– There should be some other way! You say you

hate the world, but I’m sure that’s only because of the dark lord within you!”

“Wrong. That’s al wrong.” Luke said shaking his head. “As a result of that, I accepted the dark lord. And if

he weren’t there, my hatred for the world wouldn’t go away. Let me make this very clear to you. Beyond a

doubt, this is my will. In the unlikely event that I were separated from the dark lord, the hatred within

wouldn’t go away. For one thing, if I were being influenced by the dark lord, I don’t think I would have

cal ed you here for a chal enge in the first place. I would’ve been fine hurrying off to revive the one in the

north and ending the world. In other words– This is al my will.”

“But–”

“There’s no other choice. This is the method I settled on so–”

“Understood. Let’s get to it.”

“Gourry?!” He answered quietly and I yel ed at him without a second thought. “Wait! Do you even

understand the situation?!”

“I understand.” he said. He looked at me with gentle eyes. “We aren’t responsible for destiny or the wil of

the dark lord, but isn’t this Luke’s decision? No matter what we say Luke isn’t going to change his mind. I

don’t think he even realized it, but his heart has changed. In the end, he’s no longer himself. There is only

one of two things we can do now, go along with him, or don’t go along with him. Which one? If Luke’s

gonna be selfish, isn’t it fine for us to fol ow his lead? I don’t want to take Luke’s life either, but if we don’t go with what he says,and he does what he wants like he said… After that, would you leave it up to

destiny? To someone else? Something like that?”

“That’s…” I couldn’t form any words.

“And then for argument’s sake, say we did go back to our world. When would the Mazoku, or even

someone else attack? You’d have to continue worrying about things like that then until you died. I’l pass

on that. Besides, I’m your guardian. I’m not going to leave your future up to something like luck. That’s

why right now, I’l do what I can with my own hands. Somehow. And if this is too painful for you, Lina, you

don’t have to get involved. I’l do this alone.” distinctly Gourry turned and looked to Luke. There was a

strong will burning in his glare.

“That’s sneaky of you Gourry…” I said, riding out a long sigh. “Okay, do your best, I don’t know anything,

please take care of me– I can’t say anything like that now.”

And beyond that, my future and Gourry’s future– and the futures of everyone we’ve met so far, we can’t

leave it up to something like luck. I know that. If there really is something like destiny– I’l change it with

my own hands. Right now. With the sadness, hatred, and discord that came with losing his beloved,

there’s no way to make Luke’s heart feel at ease.

“I understand…” I said. A grin came to Luke’s face. “We can’t just go along with your selfishness.”

“…I’m sorry to hear that…”

“Fine, but I’m not done. More than just going along with whatever you say, we’re going to do this

seriously.”

We’l fight. For our friend. At ful power. We’l crush his mind ourselves.

“…My bad…” With a wry smile, a white mask appeared in Luke’s hand. It was a slightly different white

mask than before. The gems that glimmered in place of the eyes weren’t the crimson that represented the

dark lord, but the same deep sepia as Luke's eyes. It firmly clung to *Luke's* face. He looked toward

Gourry.

"It would probably be hard to fight me with my original face. And I say that, but I'm not going to go easy on

you like I did in Sel entia."

"Yeah."

"Us too."

Luke nodded and retreated several steps back. The staff in his hand transformed, the red jewel wrapping

around the rest of the staff and turning it into a sword.

"Let's go."

And that was it. The dark lord's voice was the signal for the battle to begin.

***

We had been given enough power to defeat *Luke*. I switched my head into battle mode. I briefly calculated

a plan to break his mind. Just as he had said, the magic power around us shifted the sharpness of

Gourry's Blast Sword. Since we're in a space where the air is full of magic power, we can use the magic

power wrapped around *Luke* to tear him apart by sword. And for me, there's no time lag that comes with

reciting incantations. I can invoke the spells with only their chaos words. That means it would be possible

to continue using the blade of nothingness, the Ragna Blade, for a long period of time. And as for

numbers, it’s two against one. But by no means does that mean we have an advantage in fighting power.

Previously Gourry surpassed Luke in terms of sword technique. As for magic, in variation and practical

use, I exceeded Luke. But now, because Luke has been assimilated with a dark lord, he could probably

perform on the same level as Gourry in martial arts, and in terms of magic, he could easily outdo me. But

Gourry and I can coordinate. And there’s a point to my use of spel s–

Spel s that borrow power from the dark lord, won’t be effective against the dark lord. That much is

common knowledge among sorcery students. But if that’s the case, can I use spel s that borrow power

from the dark lord’s retainers? Even if I could, no matter how much power this strange world is overflowing

with, I don’t think those spel s would have enough power to deal any serious damage. Much less

shamanic magic, which doesn’t even work against pure Mazoku, so it definitely wouldn’t work against him.

Then the only things that might actually work would be a sequence of Astral spells and then a spell that

borrows power from the Lord of Nightmares. Drawing her out of the void– let me rephrase that. A spell

where part of her descends into my own body, The Giga Slave, stil can't be used. *Luke* said there was a

paper-thin partition between this world and the original world, so the magic is still highly connected. In

short, if I miscast a Giga Slave here, I'm afraid my body would be possessed. And then unlike Hel master,

he probably won't be stupid enough to mistake *her* for me.

In that case, I'l have to use the blade of nothingness, the Ragna Blade. But that has one fatal weakness.

Basically, I have to hit the opponent when I'm close. Normal y it's a spel with an extremely short duration

but I was told that it was now possible to use it for a long time. Even so, it has the same range as a sword.

So, when I get close and have a chance to strike, it is absolutely crucial that I do. For my sword skills, I

wouldn't be outdone by the average swordsman. But right now *Luke's* abilities are equal to Gourry's,

which means I fall far short of him. Can I even land an attack? To be honest it will be difficult. If I don't go

about it the right way, I'll be done in on the return stroke. So then our only chance of winning– can Gourry

do it?

In any case, Gourry can challenge him in close combat, and I can cover him from a middle distance.

That's the only form we could use.

We glared at each other for a brief period of time until I decided on a basic plan of action. Just as if he

were waiting for me, *Lu–* no, *the dark lord* moved. Just as he started running, Gourry also ran across the ground to intercept him. Out of habit I began reciting a spell. At that moment, the dark lord disappeared!

Did he cross space?! In that case he would reappear– reflexively, I looked behind me but the red figure

appeared in front! *Shit!*

It was natural if I thought about it. The dark lord knew it was to his advantage to engage me in close

combat and to attack Gourry from a distance. Not preparing for that was my own mistake. In that one

instant a number of things happened.

"Elmekia…!" I released the chaos words. The red shadow disappeared from in front of me. He hadn't

crossed space. He was very close. Using some footwork he had

wrapped around to my blind spot. I

shouldn’t have been able to see him from that position but for some reason I felt like I could see the dark

lord brandishing his sword towards me, so close that I could smell the scent of death. Never before had it

been so rich.

“You think I’l let you?!” Gourry yel ed. He held out his sword, but of course the blade couldn’t reach from

that distance. I sensed it. He was planning on throwing it. It was a risky shot, but– The smell of death

disappeared just as soon as it appeared. I promptly understood what had happened. The dark lord had

also sensed what Gourry was about to do. In order to avoid a risky attack from Gourry, he pulled back

from me. Once I understood that, I turned–

“–Lance!” firing the chaos words, a lance of light appeared, heading toward the red shadow. There was a

burst of light. At the same time I jumped back. The red shadow that had divided the light was drawing

close. I jumped back again and a different shadow passed me from behind. Gourry!

The sword that tears through demons and the demon lord’s sword. The two blades collided shaking the

atmosphere of that strange plane. A moment of attack and defense. The smell of death was still lingering

at the core of my body.

Getting a hold of myself I concentrated on the fight in front of me. Charge, upward strike, downward slash,

dodge, ward off, pin. Alternating between the two positions, I was getting dizzy as the two swords

crossed. As soon as there was some distance between them–

“Bephis Bring!” My spel bored into the soil, interfering with the ground and erasing it from beneath the

dark lord’s feet. It was as if a hole had appeared underfoot for him to fal into. For normal opponents I

couldn’t do anything against, they’d fal , and it would create a critical interval of time. But the dark lord just floated into the air. He didn’t so much as flinch, as if he hadn’t even noticed the ground beneath him was

gone.

But Gourry was charging forward. With the opponent retreating into the air, if he stepped forward and

couldn’t find a foothold, he would be at an overwhelming disadvantage if they continued their duel.

Betraying my prediction, the dark lord took a powerful step into the empty space to challenge Gourry. But

if they continued exchanging blows, the dark lord would gradually retreat back. That way if Gourry

continued pressing forward, he would arrive on the hole that I had dug out. And of course there was no

way for him to follow suit and walk on air.

“Huh!” With a hard exhale, Gourry retreated back out of sword range. The dark lord also retreated back. A

black mass spread from the dark lord’s chest, encroaching on the surrounding space. I didn’t know if it

had any attack power, but as a precaution we shouldn’t try going through it. Gourry jumped back again to

widen the distance. The blackness spread out and converged at five points– and formed the shape of five

black dark lords.

He’s tricking us! Probably only one of them was real. The other four were dummies made of the darkness.

Even though they’re dummies, they’re dummies made by the dark lord himself. We don’t know how strong

they are so it would be dangerous to make light of them. For now, all we can do is decrease their

numbers!

“Zelas Brid!” A spel that borrows power from Greater Beast Zelas Metallium. I didn’t know how effective it

would be on the actual dark lord, but I wasn't expecting much. It should at least be enough to smash

through the dummies. I imagined the spell splitting into five parts. To be more accurate, in my mind I

imagined the spell with an increased arrangement, and at the same time I recalled that image. A simple

method for arranging a spel . It's essential y the same as splitting a flare lance into a barrage of flare

arrows. Of course, in reality it would be impossible to divide this spell, but if this world is thick with magic

energy then it just might.

Only one light appeared. It passed straight through one of the black dark lords, causing it to disperse. It

was a dummy! At the same time the other four rushed toward Gourry. With both parties closing in on each

other, these tools which provided cover could potentially hurt Gourry. The black blades of the black dark

lords all simultaneously stretched toward Gourry.

"Too naive!"Gourry's sword cut down three of the black dark lords and caught the blow from the fourth.

"Your shadows are slow!"

"In that case!" Brushing aside Gourry's sword, the black dark lord once again divided into three and

rushed at Gourry.

“Stil too slow!” Gourry roared and cut into two of them. Instantly, the two that he cut exploded! It wasn’t a

big explosion, however, Gourry’s stance had crumbled. It must have been an explosion of magic energy

because the dark lord, who should have gotten caught in it, swung his sword at Gourry without so much

as a shiver.

Gourry!

The dark lord’s sword knocked into Gourry –right around where his thigh was. At the time of the explosion,

knowing he couldn’t avoid it, Gourry used the force of the blast to jump back and open the distance.

Gourry rolled to the ground a number of times, and when he tried to get up– His legs buckled and he

dropped to his knees. The damage wasn’t just superficial?! It would be bad if he was targeted now!

“Dynast Brass!” I released my spel . The thunder surrounded the dark lord, but with a wave of his sword,

he divide the thunder and it changed its course, aiming for Gourry! Gourry tried jumping away with his

hands and feet, but even so, a bolt of lightning raged down and caught him. His weight fell to the ground

with an awful sound.

“Gourry! Gourry?!” when I cal ed to him, his body moved a little.

“He’s not dead.” the dark lord said indifferently.

I see… The coordination between Gourry and I was a problem for him. That’s why. He made it look like he

was aiming for me, and without giving us a chance to coordinate, he defeated Gourry.

“He’s not dead, but his wounds aren’t light. If you hurry and defeat me, you can return to your original

world where he can be healed and he’l probably be safe. But if you can’t, you understand, don’t you?”

In other words… he’l die. I thought for a moment. My lungs… contracted. I won’t al ow that. Absolutely

not.

“That means… you’re chal enging me one on one… with a time limit…” I surprised myself with how quiet

my voice came out. Slowly… the dark lord walked toward me. “Then, let’s go!” I prepared both hands in

front of me. “Elmekia Lance!” I released my spel but the dark lord didn’t even try to avoid it. He caught it

directly without showing any sign of agitation.

“There’s no way you could have thought that would effect me.”

“Of course not! It was an experiment! An experiment!” I prepared my

hands again. “Lords of darkness of

the four worlds, grant me al the power that you possess!” With a simple spel – no, calling out the chaos

words, the demon blood talismans glowed. The dark lords of the four worlds: Ruby Eye, Dark Star,

Chaotic Blue, and Death Fog. Each jewel glowed with their four representative colors and amplified my

magic.

“Elmekia Lance!” My continued blow once again struck the dark lord.

“Now I get it… That’s a justified experiment. The power certainly has increased.” He said casually.

God, he pisses me off! Fine then!

“Zelas Brid!” The ribbon of light burst in front of the dark lord’s raised sword.

“It appears you only have one chance” The dark lord said, continuing to walk without change. “I’m giving

you the opportunity to strike me with your blade of nothingness. Normal spel s won’t work, but if you use

that one, you can cut through my sword and my flesh. But…”

“Dynast Brass!”

With a slight wave of his sword, the torrent of thunder scattered into the air.

“I also recognize that that is the truth.” The dark lord continued talking.

I know it’s useless but–

“Freeze Brid!” The ice spell I released next closed the dark lord in a giant mass of ice. That stopped his

legs for now. But then, as if nothing had happened, the dark lord passed through the ice. I thought so.

Even though there is a strong effect on magic power, it’s like the fundamental laws haven’t been

overturned. In this world, elemental spel s aren’t effective against Mazoku either! I quickly retreated back.

“Therefore, if I manage to dodge your blade of nothingness, you could turn and attack me from behind.

But if we fight directly, I’d win because I have a higher ability. Can I dodge your blade? Can you even land

a hit on me? It appears there’s only one chance.”

As I backed away the dark lord walked toward me at an ever constant pace. It was like he wasn’t even

trying to close the gap, like he was waiting for me to nail down my decision.

“You wanted a direct fight didn’t you?! That’s so manly! Unfortunately, I’m a girl!” As I spoke my head was

bustling with activity. Talking like the dark lord was a long shot, but

this was my final, final, final resort. No, if you think about the difference between our level of skill, this was more than a gamble. It was almost

desperation. You think I had any other options? Then how about this?!

“Ra Tilt!” Normal y this is a spel that I can’t use. Maybe for a simple spel , but for a high level spel , you

need training for the incantation and execution. For the Ra Tilt, I never received that kind of training. But

the spell was invoked! A blue pillar of light wrapped around the dark lord– and with a wave of his sword it

vanished.

“You forcibly invoked a spel you couldn’t use… So you can do this much after al …”

That didn’t work either?!

But should have been clear. The Zelas Brid, Dynast Brass, and now the Ra Tilt were all repelled by his

sword. On the other hand, they might have been effective if they had hit him directly. But by effective, I

didn’t know if that meant ‘quite effective’ or ‘barely effective.’

I could think of two methods for defeating him. Using a certain-death attack like the Ragna Blade. Or

whiddle away his power using a number of solid spel s like Zelas

Brid. Though I can’t realistical y say

which one would be better. It would be too difficult to try hitting him with the Ragna Blade, but on the other

hand, it wouldn’t make any sense to cast a bunch of Zelas Brid-level spells when the enemy could take

several of them silently. Wait, if I can invoke spel s that I couldn’t use before, I could use the strongest

healing spell, Resurrection, on Gourry and– No, no. That would take too much time. And the dark lord

probably wouldn’t let me get away with that. Since this world is ful of magic energy, using the demon

blood amplification would have otherwise been too taxing but now–

I stood still where I was. It was just a simple thought but… There was something I had to try before I

unleashed the Ragna Blade.

“Have you made up your mind?” The dark lord came running toward me. At that moment, I took the jewel

of the talisman on my right wrist, the blue demon blood, and crushed it.

It should have been as hard as a stone, but for some reason, I easily smashed it in my mouth and it

disappeared. Demon Blood. According to the dark lord, that was the perfected philosopher's stone, a

magic amplifier of unparalleled strength.

"Lord of another world, Chaotic Blue!" That wasn't a spel . I was simply speaking chaos words. "With your

blood as the price, display your power before me!"

"What?!" The dark lord was shocked.

If there is only a thin layer between this world and my original world, then that means there is also a thin

layer between this world and the other neighboring worlds. Which means…

The sky glittered. Waves of light spread across the sky, like ripples in on the surface of water. From the

center came down a pillar of blue light, striking down the dark lord!

"GAAAAHHHHH!?" The dark lord's scream echoed under the silent pressure of the light. The crimson

shadow took in the glare. "–nghaaaaagh!" The red light that was created was forced back into the sky by a

white light. The sky fell silent, and the dark lord stood.

"W-Was that… a spel from a dark lord of another world…?"

It was effective! It definitely was! In that case…!

“Lord of another world, Death Fog!” This time was the white jewel on my left wrist. “With your blood as the

price, display your power before me!” The space surrounding the dark lord was tainted white. It certainly

resembled fog. The mist curled. The air howled. Our world’s dark lord was mangled by it.

“Guuuuaaaagghhh!” A battle cry, or perhaps a scream of pain. There was a smal sound like something

being crushed, followed by a sound like water being thrown across the ground and the white cloud burst,

dispersing back into the atmosphere. The dark lord took a step forward and the demon sword he carried

in hand cracked.

I plucked the talisman from my belt and put the black jewel in my mouth. “Lord of another world, Dark

Star! With your blood as the price, display your power before me!” There was a low rumble through the

air. The black mass spread out, and converged on the red shadow, swal owing it along with the dark lord’s

voice. The void compacted. There was no sound. The darkness burst in midair. With a single sway the

dark lord stood up. It seemed like he had taken a considerable amount of damage but… I only had one

more demon blood on hand. It represented the opponent right in front of me. The dark lord of our world,

Shabranigdu. That meant it had zero significance. So it's just as I thought. I only have one method left…

No.

I knew the answer. It was there from the very beginning. I felt it.

"Is it… over?" The dark lord looked toward me. The mask he wore was covered in cracks, but from his

voice, his vitality hadn't gone away. "In that case… Now is the time to settle this. Let's go!" The dark lord

roared and kicked the ground. Because of those three successive attacks, his movements were

weakened but the red figure was still coming toward me! I stepped forward on the earth to meet him.

Not yet! *Not yet!* We both closed the distance together. The dark lord's hand which held his sword moved

slightly– *Now!*

"Ragna–!" I held out my right hand, "Blaaaaaade!" The red figure was stil a way off. The blade of

emptiness slashed through the air. The dark lord dipped back by a hair's breadth and evaded my strike. I

immediately propelled forward. With the force of my right arm's swing, I twisted my body– And unleashed

a blade *from my left hand*.

“Two swords?!” The dark lord screamed. Red and black blended together. There was no resistance at all.

The blade of nothingness had cut through him. But the sword was stil in the dark lord’s hand! He took a

great jump back.

“Looks like the outcome’s been decided…” Before my eyes, the blade in his hand was regenerating.

My body shook up and down. I sprung up and placed the red jewel from my chest talisman in my mouth.

“Darkness beyond twilight–” I crushed the demon blood in my mouth. Ruby Eye Shabranigdu’s demon

blood. “Crimson beyond blood that flows!” I held both hands out toward the dark lord. Both blades of

nothingness disappeared. “Buried in the stream of time, sleeps Ruby Eye!” A bril iant glow appeared in my

hands.

“Dragon Slave!”

And a brilliant explosion wrapped around the dark lord

***

A bright light scorched the soil of that unknown world. A small, long sigh leaked from my lips. And then. A

shadow emerged from the thin flames.

“There was no way I could have known…” Weaving its way through the raging, thunderous wind, the dark

lord’s voice reached me. I had seen the same scene somewhere before. Deja Vu.

“A spel that borrows my own power shouldn’t be effective against me.”

Right. I knew that. It wouldn’t be effective. Usual y.

“Then why did you use it? Why?” The dark lord’s shadow appeared from the fumes. And there, he

dropped to his knees. “*Why did it destroy me*…?” As the dark lord appeared, the red that covered his body

was already tainted. The staff that he had used as a sword was broken in his arms.

“You know the answer.” I said. The wind swel ed and his hair and mantle fluttered. “If you use a spel that

draws power from a dark lord, you can’t hurt that dark lord himself. Because of that… Since you helped

me defeat you, it wouldn’t be going too far for me to cal you an idiot. But if–” Just now, after all of this. I

was trying to stifle the tears that leaked out. I continued speaking. “What if you wanted to be destroyed?”

The wind blew.

“Oh… I see…” The voice was in no way the dark lord’s, but the

voice of the Luke that I knew. Deep with

fatigue, but a peaceful voice. “That’s right. I just… wanted to go… where she was… By the hands of you

two…” His body col apsed to the ground. “Milina… when it was just the two of us in that room… to me…

she said… she said… I mustn’t hate anyone…”

The wind blew. His words flowed out.

“Those words… I… couldn’t accept them…” His voice was thin, and growing thinner. “Sorry… okay?” It

wasn’t clear who those words were meant for. The wind blew. He turned to sand and was carried away.

And thus, the world he created–

Vanished.

***

There was the sound of a knock.

“It’s me.” The voice was Mr. Milgazia’s.

“Oh?” Gourry seemed like he was about to get out of bed but I held him back.

“It’s open.” I answered without turning around.

After everything was over, an injured Gourry and I appeared at the middle of Sairaag City. Well, even

though I say ‘City,’ it was stil in the middle of reconstruction so it

was stil on the same scale as a smal

town. Fortunately, the damage Gourry had taken wasn't as horrible as I thought, so for now we had taken

an inn and I was treating him. As today dawned, just to be on the safe side, I was seated in a chair next to

Gourry. After he had been defeated, he had no idea what had happened. And just now I had finished

telling him. The door opened and two presences entered. Without turning around, I knew it was Mr.

Milgazia and Memphy.

"Just one second, you two! You both just suddenly vanished and– Wait, are you injured?!"

"He's done being treated. His wounds have already closed so he's resting for now, just in case." I

answered with my back to Memphy.

"What… happened?" Mr. Milgazia asked. It was silent for a while. I slowly opened my mouth.

"The dark lord… was defeated… That's al ."

"The da–!?"

"Is that true…?!"

"I can't real y lie about something like that…" I gave a tired response to Mr. Milgazia's next question.

"If that's true…" Memphy's voice resounded with wonder.

“Amazing… You two could be called The

Demon Slayers, couldn’t you?”

“I don’t need a title like that.” I snapped. It was silent for a while.

“…We have also taken a room at this inn.” Mr. Milgazia’s voice sounded a bit awkward. “Once you’ve

settled down a bit, I’d like to hear some of the details of what happened. Let’s go Memphy.”

“O-Okay…”

The sound of the door closing. The two presences were far away.

“…Lina…” Gourry said softly and fixed his eyes on me.

I wasn’t impressed by your attitude just now. I thought he’d say something like that.

“Are you crying?”

“Can’t you tel by looking? I don’t have anything to cry about.”

“Yeah, I can tel by looking… You’re crying.”

“You know… maybe your eyes aren’t always so good… sometimes…” I paused in the middle of what I

was saying. “…I’m sorry. … I’m crying.”

“You were pretty aggressive there, huh?”

“Right now… I just noticed something… We… never knew Luke and Milina’s ful names… Thinking about

that… it was so sudden…”

“It’s okay. You can cry.” Gourry gently brushed my cheek. “Even though it was something Luke wanted…

it doesn’t change the fact that we were forced to do it. But you know, even with al the weight you’re

carrying, you’re stil human and you need to keep moving forward. Rubia’s doing her best. And Luke… he

couldn’t win. But Lina, if it’s you, you should be able to do that, right? And if it helps, right now, it’s okay.

You can cry.”

“Idiot.”

Seriously, this man… with his stupid quirks… But for some strange reason, it gave me strength. So… just

a little bit… I cried.

***

“Wel , we should be going soon, Memphy.”

“Yes, that’s true, Elder.”

The two of them said that suddenly one afternoon some days after the incident. Gourry was already

perfectly healed and had just gotten done eating his usual portion of food, properly separating out the

green peppers. We were now on Sairaag’s main street. It’s cal ed the main street, but it goes through a

town that’s in the middle of reconstruction. It was big for a street but

the buildings were sporadic and there

weren't very many people. But because of the reconstruction, it seemed like it was a livelier place. Even

though the people had lost something, they absolutely couldn't just grieve over it. In order to create a

better tomorrow, they were once again starting to move forward. Humans are stubborn like that.

"You're leaving so suddenly again? Where to?"

"Preparing to hibernate?" Gourry slipped in.

"……."

"Ahhhhhhh. SorrySorryIwon'tsayanymore!"

Without saying anything, Mr. Milgazia just brought his face close to Gourry's, who flailed his arms around

and retracted his slip of the tongue. Gourry, could it be… you're doing that on purpose…? Mr. Milgazia

pulled away from Gourry and looked at me.

"Even though this ordeal is over, it doesn't mean the demon outbreaks wil just stop." He said, just as

bland as ever. Of course I had already explained the details of the incident to them some days before. "I

think for a while Memphy and I wil be going around cleaning up."

"And if not, I understand that there are some fairly heinous Mazoku

wandering around. Like Xel os, who I

encountered this time, or those two female Mazoku….” Memphy then turned to Mr. Milgazia. “By the way,

who were those two? They seemed considerably powerful.”

“Memphy, you didn’t realize who they were?” he said with a surprised voice.

“Did you know them, Elder?”

“There’s no way I’d know for sure, but they were probably Greater Beast Zelas Metallium and Deep Sea

Dolphin.” He just said it so carelessly and without any delay, Memphy and I just babbled unintelligibly.

“Z-Zel–!”

“D-Dol–?!”

“It felt lie those two had more power than Xellos. Right now among the Mazoku there are only two who

have more power than Xel os and are stil able to move around so it was probably those two.” Mr. Milgazia

said very naturally.

“U-Uh, you say ‘probably’ but… I-If that’s true then that was one overly luxurious reception…”

“W-We real y… made it out safely…”

“Yeah. If we had foolishly gotten involved, we wouldn’t have been safe. Fortunately before anything could

happen the two of them disappeared. Just thinking about it stil makes me shiver." He said with his usual

dull expression and tone without even a slight twitch. *How scared were you really?*

"Anyway. With that said, humans, should fate al ow it, we shal meet again."

"Be wel , okay?"

They said anticlimactically, then Mr. Milgazia and Memphy turned their backs and left.

"Wel , they left real y fast."

"They're probably relieved" As we watched their backs, Gourry responded to my comment.

"Relieved?"

"Yeah." Gourry put his hand on my head. "Relieved because you've cheered up, and they can go off to do

their own thing."

"Relieved… Did I real y seem that depressed?"

"A little." Gourry looked back. The forms of Mr Milgazia and Memphy had already disappeared. "Wel ,

what should we do now?"

"I dunno. There isn't anything in particular I want to do… Wait! Don't just leave everything to me! Think for

yourself a little, Gourry! Don’t you have an opinion or somewhere you want to go?”

“Hm… I guess… wel , then…” Gourry looked dead into my eyes. “How about we go to your place?”

“…eh?” My heart jumped. I quickly turned my face away. “U-Um, Gourry… What you just said… Do you

even know what that implies?!”

“Yeah. That’s my intention.” His voice was… gentle.

「あんた……それがどーいう意味かわかって言ってんの!?」
「ああ……そのつもりだ」

“Huh…?” My body trembled again. I knew my face was flushed.

And then in that gentle voice, Gourry said, “You once said your homeland, Zephilia, was famous for

grapes. And look, grapes are in season about now.”

“This is about your *appetiiiiite*?!”

SMACK!

Without delay I pulled a slipper from my breast pocket and laid into him like lightning.

“What was that for? You don’t like grapes?”

“That’s not it!…Daaahhhhhh! Fine! Whatever!”

“Sooo, that means you’ve decided on Zephilia?”

“Where’d you get that from?!”

“Because you said ‘whatever.”

“Hey…”

“It’s good to return home once in a while. Definitely.”

“. . . . . .”

Wel … It’s not *bad* to do that once in a while… but for some reason, this guy’s being unusual y pushy

about it… Actual y… Maybe he really does understand exactly what he’s doing…

“Wel … that’s fine but… Understood. Our destination is my family’s home. Zephiel City in the Kingdom of

Zephilia! Okay?”

“Yeah!”

Thus Gourry and I started walking shoulder to shoulder. There would probably be other stops along the

way. And surely again there will be all sorts of happenings. Encounters, partings. By some chance, I might

even do things that remind me of things I’ve done in the past. But I won’t just close my eyes and try to

forget the pain and sadness. I'd keep them in my heart, and overcome them. As long as I'm living, I'l be

smiling into tomorrow.

Slayers • End

Book 15 Afterword

Author (Kanzaka) + L

K: With great pain, and at long last, it's the final volume of the series! I present to you, Demon Slayers!

This marks the end of the Slayers series.

L: By this time next week, the heartfelt Great Dark Lord Comedy 'Sometimes ☆ Chaotic Magical L-rin!'

will be–

K: Nonexistent. Absolutely no way in frozen hell will it ever exist.

L: Ch! Didn't have to say al that!

S: Utterly disrespectful. Behaving that way toward L-sama.

K: …huh? Why…?

L: Oh yeah. Since this is the final afterword of the series, I thought I'd bring out Subordinate S.

S: Ha Ha Ha. It is a gift to be here with the beautiful and most tolerant great lord L.

K: Uhhh…

L: Since Slayers is such a long running series, it's unspeakable that Subordinate S wouldn't be included

even once. To tie everything up, he should tell all sorts of his stories.

S: Thank you very much. But L-sama is a far superior being than I! That means it's not exaggerating to

declare that the true heroine of the Slayers series is actually L-sama, right?! Rather, if you don't think

that's the truth then you need to think about it more.

K: Um…

L: Oh no~ I'm so embarrassed to be praised like this~

S: Don't be embarrassed! You deserve al the world's glorification!

K: …could I maybe ask a smal question?

L: Huh? What?

S: How boorish, asking questions in the middle of my glorification of L-sama. What is it?

K: Nothing, just… Even though he's making an appearance, S's name isn't listed under the Afterword title.

And L is clutching onto some kind of suspicious control er, and there's this weird electrode thing sticking

out of S's temple. I was just thinking that maybe those things were al related.

L: . . . . . .

K: . . . . . .

L: K–! (press)

S: Ha Ha Ha. What are you talking about? That is very bizarre. It's al in your imagination, al in your

imagination.

K: …is this… a robot? Hah! Don't tel me you modded his brain?!

L: What are you saying?! (click click press press)

S: How rude of you to be making false accusations about L-sama! Completely discourteous!

K: Wai–! What kind of command did you just enter?! Let me go! Wh-What's that syringe for?!

L: Yeah, that. Just a second. Don't worry, don't worry.

K: I AM WORRIED!!

(in surgery)

L: Okay then! It got a little slapstick there, but anyway, this has been the final volume of the series.

K: (electrode sticking out) I'd like to stress that the continuation of this series is al thanks to the support

from the readers and L-sama who presided over the afterword. I truly thank you.

L: . . . . . He's doing it on his own but… It's a little uncanny having the author speak so highly of me… In

that case, I'l switch him to normal thought mode. There.

K: Huh?! What was I just…?!

L: Yeah, it's fine. Anyway, I was just wrapping up the afterword.

K: R-Right. And s this concludes the Slayers series. Whatever Lina and Gourry do after this– The straight

answer is, I purposeful y haven’t prepared that. With the games, anime, and comics, there are three

different ways the story unfolds, and of course different endings for each. I think I’d like to end this story

with room for al of those remaining wild ideas. Readers, you’ve stayed with us this far, and I real y want to

thank you.

S: But as long as there are afterwords in the short series, L-sama will always appear.

L: That said, If you like, you can stil pick up the short series ‘Select’ and ‘Smash.’

K: With this and that. Once again, I would be happy if we could meet again someday.

Afterword • End